

## Cluny Castle, Aberdeenshire

H Gordon Slade\*

*An investigation into the original form of this castle built c 1604, and largely replaced in the 1830s by a large mansion in the castellated style designed by John Smith.*

‘. . . I have learned that a huge mushroom cotton manufactory has been raised up by the proprietor of this beautiful and antique gem by which the singular merits of so pure a specimen of architects’ art are now smothered up in modern masonry.’

*James Skene of Rubislaw, 1838*

‘About 30 years ago he built a splendid addition to the house at Cluny, enveloping the old mansion in a complete new castellated front, the exterior now presenting one of the finest pieces of architecture in the north.’

*Banffshire Journal, 1 July 1858*

‘Before leaving let us turn back and take a view of the Castle as it now stands. The late Colonel Gordon, many years ago, resolved to renovate the old Castle without taking any of it down, which he succeeded in accomplishing most effectually, so that the Castle of Cluny is now one of the finest specimens of masonry that is to be seen in Scotland.’

*‘Cluny 60 years ago’: unidentified newspaper cutting, c 1900*

‘. . . perhaps the most shocking misuse of architectural effort and granite in the north east.’

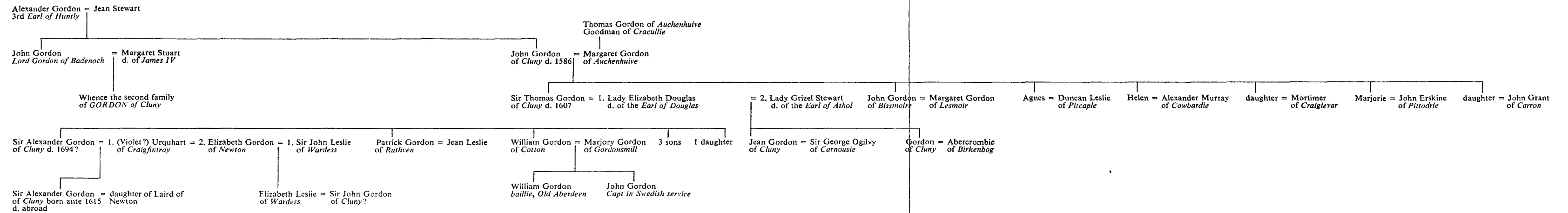
*‘Castle Fraser’: H Gordon Slade, 1978*

The Cluny Castle built by John Smith for Colonel John Gordon c 1820–36 has seldom been viewed with favour save in the columns of an excessively parochial and sycophantic local press. Even professed admirers of the Gothic revival have dismissed it in words of ill-concealed and contemptuous patronage. The reason for this distaste is resentment at the loss of the old Cluny romantically sketched and described by James Skene – a Cluny which has acquired an aura of mystery and beauty turning it into a species of 17th-century Aberdeenshire Neuschwanstein – and the fact that the new Cluny is not nearly gothic enough for the enthusiasts. Hence the comment by James Macaulay ‘. . . a monstrous swelling of a small Z-plan castle which was buried beneath towers eight storeys high. It is a curiously archaic building in its parts. Twenty years out of date it is like a Regency buck, grown cankerous and old, flaunting the colours of the picturesque’: clever writing, but inaccurate, as will be shown.

The lands of Cluny were originally granted by King Robert Bruce sometime before 1325 to Sir Alexander Fraser, who had married his sister, Mary. From this couple was descended Margaret Fraser whose husband was Sir William Keith the Great Marischal; their daughter

\* 15 Southbourne Gardens, London SE12

TABLE 1  
The first GORDONS of Cluny



married Sir Adam Gordon of Huntly. He was killed, with his two uncles, in 1402 at the Battle of Homildon Hill and the Gordon estates passed to his daughter, Elizabeth. Not only was she the heiress of the Gordons of the legitimate line but she also succeeded to the great Keith inheritance in south and central Aberdeenshire, which included Aboyne and Cluny. From Elizabeth and her husband, Alexander Seton, the Cluny lands passed to their son, Alexander, 1st Earl of Huntly, and from him, through his son and grandson, to Alexander Gordon, the first Laird of Cluny of the first Gordons of Cluny.

Alexander Gordon – the second son of Alexander, 3rd Earl of Huntly – was not to be the founder of the family for the only legitimate child to survive him was his daughter Janet, and Cluny passed to his younger brother. John Gordon, the 2nd Laird, had married Margaret Gordon, the daughter of Thomas Gordon of Auchenuive – also known as the Goodman of Craullie – and together they raised seven children. John built the castle of Blairfindy where he died in 1586 having married his five daughters to the Lairds of Pitcaple, Cowbardie, Craigievar, Pittodrie, and Carron, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir Thomas Gordon, 3rd of Cluny.

With Sir Thomas the family fortunes seem to have reached their highest point. He had married well; his first wife, Elizabeth, being the daughter of the Earl of Douglas, and his second, equally well-born, was Grizel, the daughter of the Earl of Athol. And it was he who was the builder of the castle at Cluny which replaced an earlier house, either on the present site or near to it. Preserved at Cluny is a stone with the inscription '*THOM. GORDON A CLUNY MILES ME FECIT 1604*'. This date probably marks the finishing of the work, so it is likely that building started in 1601 or 1602. Sir Thomas was to die in 1607 only three years after the completion of his new house and from that date the family fortunes began to decline. Two noble wives, and the cost of building a new castle are likely to strain any fortune, and Sir Alexander Gordon, 4th of Cluny, may have found that on coming into his inheritance much of it had already been dissipated: he was to dissipate the remainder.

Rather more is known of Sir Alexander than of any other member of his family for he figures frequently in Spalding's '*History of the Trubles*' but his end, and that of his descendants is obscure. His first wife – said to be called by the improbable name of *Violet* – was a daughter of John Urquhart, the Tutor of Cromarty and builder of Craigston. By this marriage there was at least one son, and possibly two. The first, also named Alexander had been born between 1612 and 1615, as in the latter year, his father on his behalf granted a Tack letter of the teind sheaves of various lands in Aboyne to the Marquis of Huntly. This alienation of revenues for ready money suggests that there may already have been financial difficulties to be overcome.

This seems to have been only a temporary answer for by 1636 the control of the Cluny property had passed out of Sir Alexander's hands. In that year a precept under the Great Seal was given to the Sheriff of Aberdeen to infest George Morrison in the Mains and Manor place of Cluny as apprised by him from William Coutts of Auchtercoul for a debt of 5,600 merks. How William Coutts laid his hands on Cluny is not recorded, but it seems to have been a fairly thorough gathering up. Usually if an estate passed into the hands of creditors the Laird managed to live on in the house but this does not seem to have been the case at Cluny, and no doubt explains why, when Gordon married Lady Leslie in 1641, the Bridal was celebrated at Tilliefour.

The description contained in this precept shows how little the Cluny lands have changed in the intervening years

' . . . totes et integras terras dominicales et maneriei locum de Cluny cum dominibus edificii hortis pomariis et pertinentis earundem lie Woodend de Cluny molendino de Cluny terris molendinariis multuris et lie knaiffschippes earundem molendino fullonum

TABLE 2  
The second GORDONS of Cluny

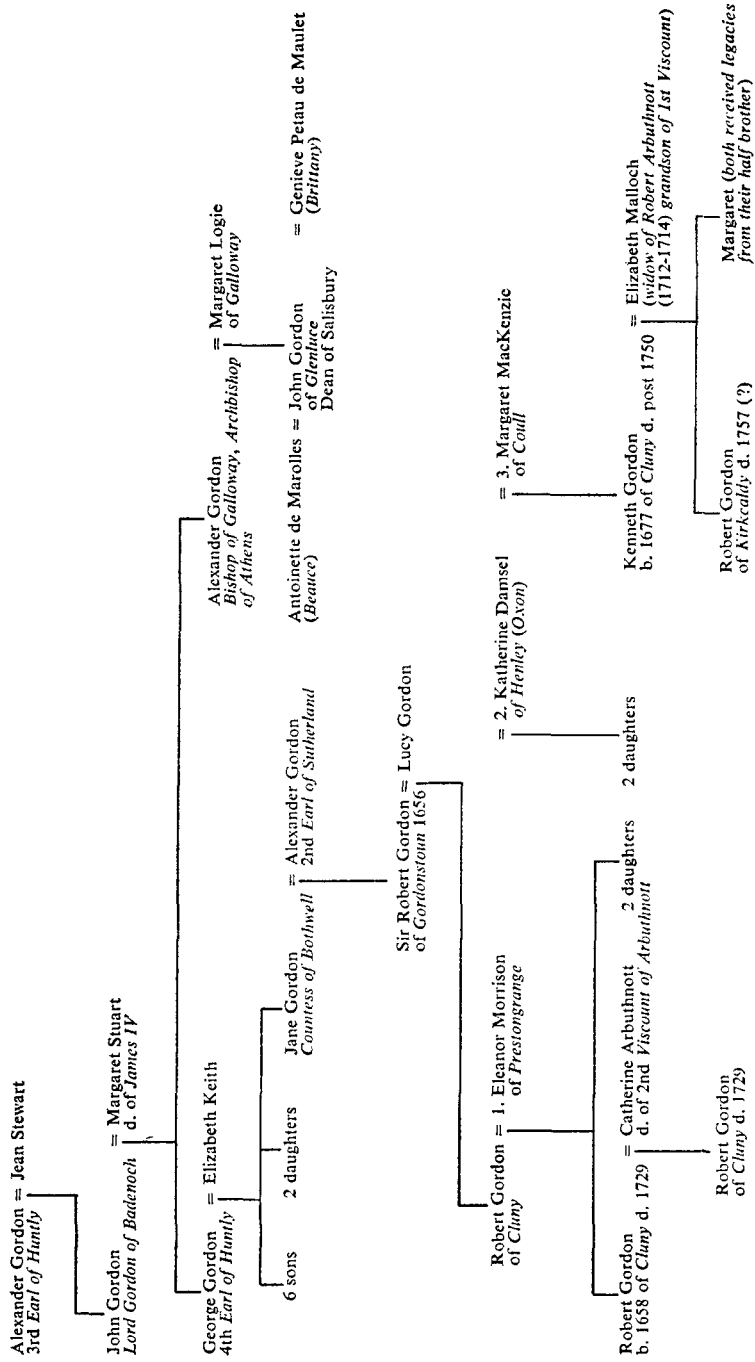
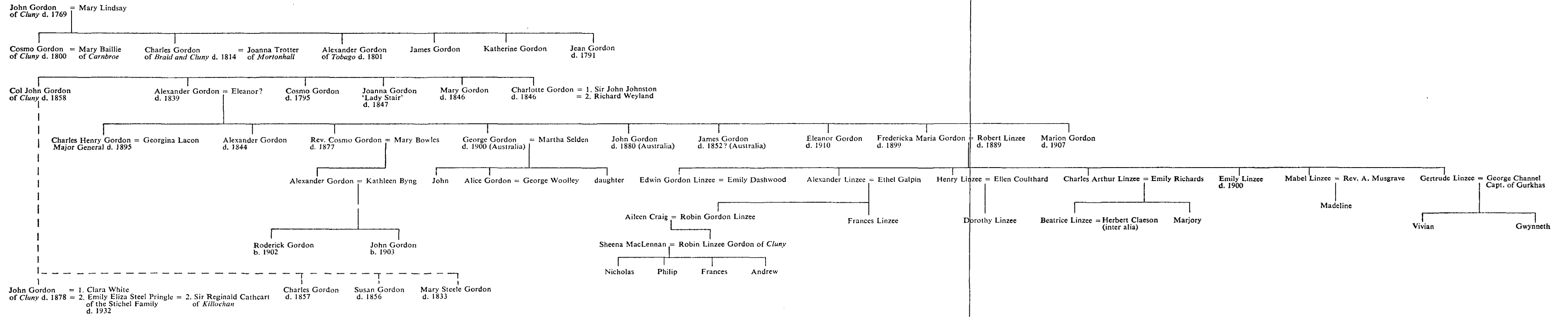


TABLE 3  
The third GORDONS of Cluny



de Cluny cum moris marresiis pratis toftis croftis outsettis insettis partibus pendiculus et pertinentis dictaram villarum et terrarum unacum decimis garbalibus earundem jacentes infra vicecomitatem nostrum predictum de Aberdein . . .'

[. . . the whole and complete lands of the mains and manor place of Cluny, with the house, buildings, gardens, orchards, and pertinents thereof, the Woodend of Cluny, mill of Cluny, lands and tolls of the mill and the Cottown thereof, fulling mill of Cluny with moors, marshes, meadows, tofts, crofts, outfields, infields, small farms, and pertinents of the said vills and lands together with tithes and dues thereof within our sherrifdom aforesaid of Aberdeen . . .]

In the troubled years of the 1630s and '40s Cluny appears as a loyal adherent of Lord Huntly, who employed him on political errands. In June 1638 Lady Huntly died at Cluny's lodgings in Old Aberdeen – lodgings in the sense of a town house – and he was with Huntly in Aberdeen in October of the same year for the signing of the *Confession of Faith*. In the following year he was away twice; once returning in one of the King's pinnaces escorting a merchantman with stores of weapons, and later in April when he went south with letters from Huntly to the King – a journey which was never completed, as he was recalled when he reached Edinburgh.

On 27 May 1637 he lost some of the weapons which he had brought in by sea, when his house in Old Aberdeen was attacked by Montrose's men; they '*broke up the Laird of Cluny's yettis in Old Aberdeen and Hall Door, went in and took six score pikes*'. He was in England again between February and June of 1640, travelling on both occasions by sea.

These calls of public duties no doubt strained his remaining resources but the circumstances of his private life did not help. He and his wife were close friends of Sir John Leslie of Wardess and his wife, Elizabeth Gordon of Newton. So close indeed was the friendship that it gave rise to scandal. MacFarlane in his *Genealogical Collections* records that the two men contracted so close a friendship that they dwelt together in one family; and it was thought there was too much familiarity betwixt them and their ladies! There may be some malice in this for the ladies were not viewed with favour by the Kirk; Elizabeth Gordon had on one occasion tricked the Bishop of Aberdeen into blessing her extremely illegal chapel at Tilliefour, for which the unfortunate prelate was soundly trounced by his more saintly brethren. In November 1640 Sir John Leslie died, and, Lady Gordon also being dead, the remaining pair were married the following year, but not it seems until the Kirk had insisted on the banns being called. Presumably their lives were an offence to the delicate morals of their neighbours. The marriage took place at Cluny, June 22, and the bridal feast was held at Tilliefour. However by 1642 Cluny's affairs had become so involved that he was obliged to leave Aberdeen, settling in Durham, '*there to remain quhil sum course wes takin anent his effaires*'. Lady Gordon was to die in December the same year at Durham; Spalding attributes her death to '*ane cancer in one of hir papes, quhilk eit into the bowellis: but tuo yeir befor scho went to England, this cancer wers in hir pape*'. Such was the end of the '*Nymph of Tilliefour*'. It seems that she finally ruined both her husbands – '*an evill instrument to the down-throwing of both these fair and flourishing estates*'.

Sir Alexander returned to Aberdeen in 1643 with his step-daughter Elizabeth Leslie, when he was given four months grace to compound his debts with his creditors, after which he soon disappears from history; he is supposed to have died abroad sometime in 1644. The family too disappeared; according to the *Balbithan MS* Sir Alexander's son, also Alexander, married the daughter of the Laird of Newton, and died abroad without issue. MacFarlane records that Elizabeth Leslie of Wardess married, as her first husband, Sir John Gordon of Cluny – this seems a mistake in the christian name of the baronet. A similar mistake was made in 1668 in a

birth brieve where it is recorded that William Gordon of Cotton was brother to Sir William Gordon of Clunie, whereas he was in fact brother to the first Sir Alexander. However it seems clear that the last Gordon of Cluny of the first house was Alexander, born sometime before 1615 and probably dead by 1668, having married his step-sister after his return to Aberdeen from Durham in 1643.

What happened to the estate after 1644 is not known; it may have remained with the creditors or have passed through several hands before 1680 by which date it had come into the possession of Robert Gordon, 1st Laird of Cluny of the second house.

Robert Gordon was the third son of Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun by his wife Lucy Gordon. On his father's side he was the grandson of Alexander Gordon, 2nd Earl of Sutherland by his wife Jane Gordon, the divorced wife of Mary Stuart's Earl of Bothwell. From his mother he inherited Gordon blood of the same degree for her father, John Gordon, Dean of Salisbury, had been first cousin to Lady Sutherland. She was the daughter of George, 4th Earl of Huntly, and he was the son of the Earl's younger brother, Alexander, Bishop of Galloway and titular Archbishop of Athens. As a leaven to the Gordon blood Lucy's mother had been a French woman, Genieve Petaur le Maulet from Brittany. Presumably, as she had married a dignitary of the Church of England, she was a Huguenot. Dean Gordon's first wife was also French, Antoinette de Marolles from the Beauce.

Robert Gordon married three times, and the last three Lairds of his house were descended from his first and last wives. His eldest son, also Robert, whose mother was Eleanor Morrison of Prestongrange was born in 1658 and married Catherine, daughter of the 2nd Viscount of Arbuthnott; he was succeeded on his death in 1725 by their son, Robert 3rd Laird who only enjoyed the estate for four years dying in 1729. Robert Gordon 1st had married, as his second wife an English woman, Katherine Damsel of Henley. The two children of this marriage – which seems to have been spent in England – died young and were not long survived by their mother. For his third wife Robert was to look inside Aberdeenshire again – perhaps he felt that his veins contained as much Gordon blood as was good for any family. His choice fell on a Highland woman, Margaret MacKenzie, daughter of Sir Kenneth MacKenzie of Coull. Their son Kenneth, who married the widow of Robert Arbuthnott, grandson of the 1st Viscount of Arbuthnott, was the last Gordon Laird of Cluny of the second house. Before his death in the early 1750s the estate was already in other hands. His son Robert, who died in 1757 was a plain farmer in Kirkcaldy.

The end of the second house of Gordon seems to have taken place in a confusion of financial difficulties and Jacobite sentiments. The story is to be found in the Gordon of Cluny papers in the Scottish Record Office, and a sorry story it is.

Sir William Gordon of Invergordon was greatly concerned in 1719–20 in the purchase of stock in the *Mississippi Company* – the French equivalent of the *Darien Scheme* and promoted by John Law, an enterprising fellow Scot – and on his return to London from Paris Sir William left his affairs in the hands of Robert Gordon. According to Kenneth Gordon's memorial to Lord Streichen (apparently written in 1750, but the date has been eaten by mice) Sir William Gordon

' . . . gave him powers which Mr Gordon of Cluny thought at that time was sufficient to make the loss in that trade if such should happen fall upon Sir William Gordon – But as his powers were not so clear and that Cluny had really dealt a little for himself – and Sir William had advanced Cluny considerable sums . . . '

The upshot was that when the Company crashed in 1721 Sir William claimed that Robert Cluny's dealings on his own account had been somewhat extensive and there was a sum of

£3,000 sterling owing to him – an astronomical sum set against the rents of Cluny and Tillycairn which totalled £426.14.6 Scots. This claim had not been settled by the time of Robert Gordon's death in 1729, and Sir William Gordon and his son John assigned £2,450 of this debt to their creditors.

This assignment was obviously considered to be of value and secured against the Cluny estate for in 1730 it had come into the hands of Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk. He passed it the same year to an Edinburgh merchant, John Thompson. On his bankruptcy it passed in 1732 to Christian Cole and William Wilkinson in trust for the use of the *Charitable Institution*. From there it passed in 1736 to Samuel Groves of the parish of St James, Westminster; he passed it in 1743 to Adam Gordon of the Middle Temple who four years later handed it on to Charles Hamilton Gordon, Advocate. All this time the interest due on this bond would have been accruing, and Charles Hamilton Gordon was the son of Sir William Gordon, the originator of the bond.

At this point another figure appears in the story, one James Petrie. According to Kenneth Gordon's memorial of 25 June 1750,

'That James Petrie, writer in Aberdeen, having formed a project to himself to get possession of the memorialist's Estate of Cluny which was encumbered with debts to the extent of 20,000 marks. . . .'

In 1750 James Petrie had bought up the debts on the estate and persuaded Charles Hamilton Gordon to dispose Sir William's bond to Jean Jamieson, daughter of James Jamieson of Balmuir. It was the process against himself at the instance of this Jean Jamieson that had been the cause of Kenneth Gordon's two memorials.

Why James Petrie should have been so anxious to acquire the Cluny estates is not known, nor is it known if he acquired them, or why, if having acquired them he should have parted with them by 1753, in which year John Gordon received a grant of the arms of Gordon of Cluny from the Lord Lyon. Possibly it was John Gordon who wished to obtain possession of the Cluny estates, and had engaged Petrie to act for him rather than incur the odium of doing the job himself.

The '45 may have added to the difficulties at Cluny. Apart from sheltering known fugitives – it is recorded that, after Culloden, Patrick Byers of Tonley found refuge at Cluny – there is evidence of more direct involvement. Lord Lewis Gordon writing to Colonel James Moir of Stonywood on 31 October 1745 says

' . . . Suppose my cussen, Clunie Gordon, is past the age of action in the field, yet he may be of great use in the country, and I hear his son is a very fine young gentleman, and may be of great use; and now when everything that is most valuable is at stake he can never have a more glorious opportunity'.

It would seem that he took this opportunity, for Robert Gordon of Clunie Younger, who may have served in Lord Lewis Gordon's regiment, was arrested on 'suspicion' and jailed in Cluny's House, Aberdeen, and in the Canongate at Edinburgh, being discharged on bail on 8 November 1746. His father, who was arrested at about the same time had been discharged from the Canongate on bail in the previous month. He too had been arrested 'on suspicion', early in June, after he had given shelter to Patrick Byers; the two events may not have been unconnected. According to the records Kenneth Gordon appealed to be put on the Government subsistence as his goods had been sequestrated.

Unlike the first two houses of Gordon of Cluny the beginnings of the third House are uncertain, as is the date at which it came into the possession of Cluny itself. The founder, John



Gordon was born about 1695, and is supposed to have derived from the Gordons of Strathaven or Dykeside but there seems to be no direct evidence for this. He made his money partly as an Edinburgh merchant and partly as factor to the estates of the Duke of Gordon. On the death of Cosmo, 3rd Duke of Gordon, John Gordon was of sufficient importance to be joined with Katherine, Duchess of Gordon, and Alexander Udny of Udny as tutor or guardian of the 4th Duke. This suggests a closer connection with the family than a mere factorship would warrant.

If the tradition that John Gordon descended from the Strathaven branch is correct then it must be through James Gordon, the younger illegitimate son of Alexander Gordon, 1st Laird of Strathaven and Cluny.

He seems to have had some Jacobite sympathies. Lord Lewes Gordon writing to the Duke of Perth in October 1745 says: 'I sent for Mr John Gordon, the Duke my brother's chief Commissioner – he advised me not to see my brother . . . Your Grace will be so good as not to mention Mr Gordon's being with me in these affairs as he dos not care to meddle in a public way'. Later that year he was caught up in the fight at Inverurie; Thomas Grant of Achoynany writing to Ludovick Grant of Grant says: 'I am informed that John Gordon, Chamberlain in Strathbogie disarmed the last of the Macleods and Monroes who came up in twos and threes crossing the river'.

A John Gordon of Kirkhill, factor to the Duke of Gordon was in prison in Inverness in April 1746, arrested on a charge of 'aiding and assisting the Pretender whilst in this country'. He was ordered to be tried by a civil court as he had not been taken in arms. Nothing further is recorded of him. If he were the same person as the John Gordon previously mentioned such very civil treatment after Culloden argues a strong dose of Ducal interference.

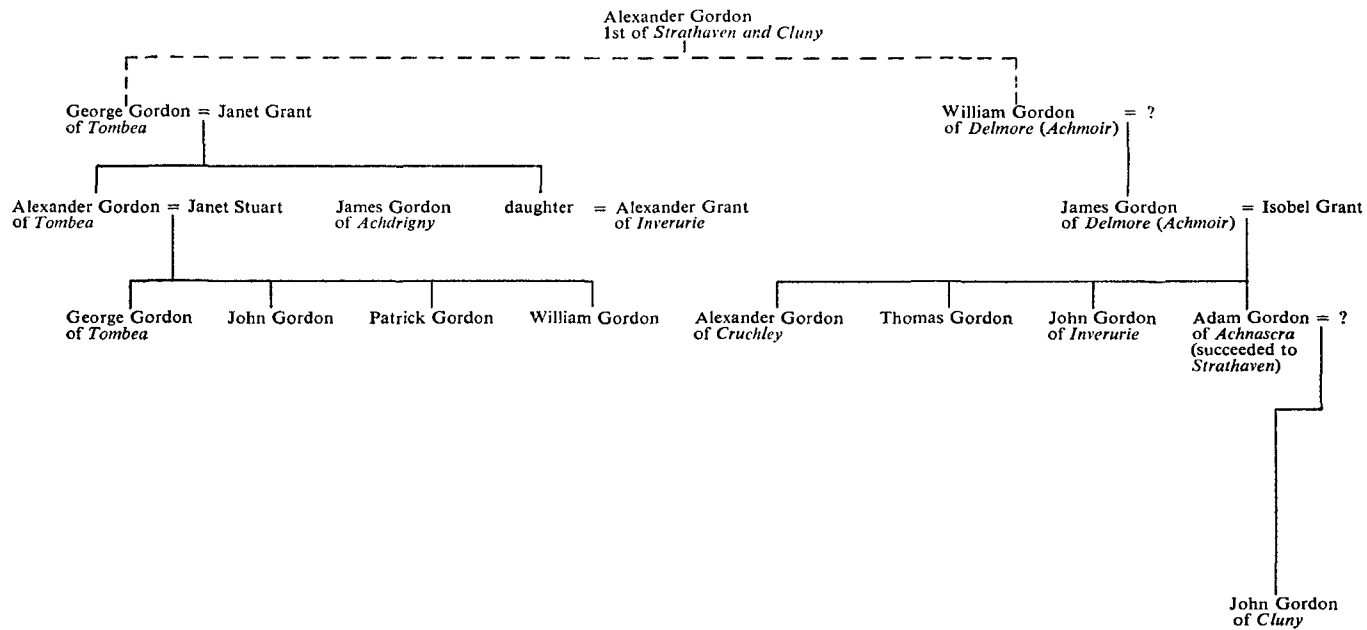
On John's death Cluny passed to his eldest son Cosmo, named after the 3rd Duke of Gordon, and, at one remove, after Cosimo da Medici, Duke of Tuscany. Cosmo Gordon was born about 1736 and was called to the Bar in 1758. As legal adviser to the Duke of Gordon, a Writer to the Signet, sometime Rector of Marischal College and Baron of the Exchequer, it is surprising that he had time to concern himself with his estates. He was however an improving landlord, particularly concerned with his property around Buckie where he planned to develop a model village. He was married late in life in 1786 to Mary Baillie when he was 50 and she was 18. Before his marriage he had been improving the Cluny property for in 1772 Peter May was involved in surveying the estate, but it was his marriage that must have decided him to call on Robert Adam to prepare a scheme for improving the castle itself in 1790. The sudden death of Mrs Gordon in 1791 and Adam's death in 1792 would have caused the proposals to be abandoned, although a set of drawings dated 1793, probably by James Adam and, sadly, indicating Mrs Gordon's apartments still survives.

Charles Gordon who succeeded his brother in 1800, and who was also a Writer to the Signet and an adviser to the Dukes of Gordon, lived at Cluny and at his estate at Braid near Edinburgh, becoming both eccentric and excessively penurious in later years and no money was spent on Cluny in his lifetime. It was probably whilst he was Laird that James Skene of Rubislaw made his sketches and description of the castle.

Charles Gordon was followed in 1814 by his eldest son, Colonel John Gordon, and it was in his day that the castle assumed its present form. He employed John Smith of Aberdeen as his architect and there is a possibility that Smith was there as early as 1818; there is also a possibility that William Wilkins may have been involved as well in 1819. Certainly by 1836 the old house had been completely and strikingly transformed. Colonel John who sat for some years in Parliament, and whose military rank derived from his honorary colonelcy of the 55th Aberdeenshire Militia

TABLE 4

The illegitimate lines descending from *ALEXANDER GORDON, 1st of Strathaven and Cluny*



was as eccentric as any member of his family and a good deal less pleasant than most of them. Having *'abandoned a Parliamentary career in disgust'* and finding that returns on investments were not as much as he wished he set about acquiring land. He had already inherited Cluny, Braid, Slains and Kinstearry from his father together with much of the property of his Uncle Alexander, a rich West India merchant and he was to add enormously to this. Starting with the estate of Shiels, next to Cluny, he then acquired the Islands of Benbecula and South Uist at the cost of £150,000, Midmar for some £60,000, Kebatty for £45,000, and Barra and North Uist. Like so many proprietors of estates in Ireland and the Highlands and Islands the Colonel was faced with land which could not support the surplus population which it carried, a situation made worse by the famine years of the 1830s and the 1840s. Within the economic and political thinking of the time the only rational answer to the problem was to adopt a policy of clearance. It was for the peoples' own good. No doubt it was; all social engineering is justified in such terms, and in the end the results often are beneficial. Unfortunately there is a quite disproportionate degree of suffering entailed in achieving the desirable and rational end, a degree of suffering which is seldom realised by the instigators who are too far removed from the actions resulting from their instruction. Thus, as with so many others in a like case, Colonel John's name could be blessed on his Aberdeenshire estates, where he was a model landlord, but cursed in Canada by the 2,000 cleared and transported tenants of his Island properties.

Gordon died, a millionaire, in 1858. He had never married, and only one of his illegitimate children, his eldest son John, survived him. In order that his huge fortune should pass to his direct issue and not to his heirs at law he attempted to devise a system of entails and trusts which would ensure this. The litigation resulting from his efforts was to last for 20 years and to be of great interest and profit to the lawyers.

It was the death of his youngest daughter, Mary, in 1833 that seems to have made John Gordon consider the future disposition of his very considerable property, influenced largely by a promise made to her that his other children should not suffer in their inheritance because of their bastardy. In the same year he decided to execute a deed of entail for 'the better preservation of his estates, family and name'. The gist of this was that all was to be entailed on the eldest son procreated of his body and *his* heirs male. Failing this line and that of any other of his heirs, or any other nominated heirs the succession was to be his brother Alexander and the heirs whatsoever of *his* body, and then his three sisters in order of birth. This deed was found after his death and was never feudalised. However in 1835 he executed a further deed in which he stated it was not his present intention to marry. This deed entailed the estates on Charles, the younger son, and his heirs, and then on John, the elder son. Following this he made a will in 1837 to which he added a codicil in 1852. This obliged the heirs of entail succeeding under the entail to assume the name of 'Gordon' and the arms and designation of 'Gordon of Cluny'. He had by now quarrelled with his youngest sister, Charlotte who had died in 1846, and specifically excluded her and her heirs from any right of succession. His mother's family, the Trotters of Mortonhall, also fell under his displeasure and were excluded from any possible enjoyment of the estates of Braid and Craighouse. He then directed his Trustees to execute a deed of entail settling the estates of South Uist, Benbecula and Barra on Charles and his heirs, failing whom John was to succeed. He also directed his Trustees to expend the residue of his estate on buying property contiguous to Cluny and the other entailed estates. In July 1852 he had doubts about this arrangement and foreseeing the possibility of his desire for the welfare of his children being defeated by the deeds already executed he decided to leave them 'presents' on his death; £750,000 to John, £450,000 to Charles, and £10,000 to Susan. The ink could hardly have been dry on the paper before the Colonel was making fresh plans; he executed a trust which made the whole entail extremely doubtful. Under

this the Trustees were to entail some estates on John and his heirs, and others on Charles and his heirs. Each brother and his heirs being heirs to the other. Five years later, having exhausted his ingenuity, the Colonel died. All his brothers and sister were dead, and so were three of his children. John, the eldest survived his father, as did General Henry Gordon, Alexander's eldest son, and the heir-at-law. The Trustees then executed a deed of entail in favour of John Gordon and his heirs, whatsoever, failing whom the heirs whatsoever and assignees of General Gordon which seemed to combine common sense, and common justice, and respected the intentions of the deceased in so far as these could be interpreted.

This however did not satisfy John Gordon, the new Laird. In 1861 he started, in a friendly way, against the General and the Trustees, an action to show that the entail was invalid and that he was proprietor in fee simple. His grounds for contesting the validity of the entail were that as he was illegitimate the only heirs whatsoever that he could have would be heirs of his body (and then only if he were to marry) and that it excluded heirs portioners – a Scots law term for female heirs as distinct from co-heiresses. The Lord Ordinary found for Mr Gordon but this was overthrown on appeal, on the grounds that there was no proper defender in the person of an heir to the entail: the merits of the case had nothing to do with it.

To test this further Mr Gordon sold part of Braid to a Mr McGregor who refused to pay on the grounds that, as he was only heir to the entail, Mr Gordon was unable to give him a clear title. As only £300 was involved this was something of a job. Mr Gordon threatened an execution and Mr McGregor on contesting it lost. This case went to appeal, and it was considered so important that it was heard by 13 judges, who with one dissenting voice, declared it to be a capital thing and found in favour of the laird.

John Gordon's next action against the Trustees and his unfortunate cousin was to have it declared that the Trust deed did not contain a direction to execute a valid entail, and that he should be paid the residue of his father's estate. This too was decided in his favour.

With this behind him John Gordon then executed a further Trust conveying to his Trustees all the estates which he held under the 1859 deed, with the provision that the Hebridean estates were to be conveyed to his widow absolutely if he should die without heirs of his body, but with an ultimate destination to the same heirs under the original entail – that is to say, General Gordon and his heirs. There was however one rather odd condition attached; the widow had the power to alter that destination herself. John Gordon was not cold in his grave – he died in 1878 – before his widow had conveyed those estates to herself, her heirs and assignees whomsoever. And as Lady Cathcart, for she married a second time, she was to enjoy them for many years, which was not quite what old Colonel John Gordon had intended.

In 1880 General Gordon raised a final action against his uncle's Trustees, his cousin's Trustees, and his cousin's widow. The object of the action was to oblige the Trustees to execute a deed of entail of Colonel Gordon's land in favour of the General and the heirs of his body. The arguments were various, complicated and legal but the intention was that the entail should be created that had been Colonel John's intention. The Courts however disliked entails and preferred to find on the letter rather than on the intentions and the General lost his case. Lady Cathcart continued to enjoy her late husband's inheritance.

The estates were destined for Colonel John's great nephew Charles Linzee – the fourth son of Colonel John's niece, Fredericka Maria – and eventually passed to his daughter Beatrice who was born in 1891. She assumed the name of Gordon, and added Claeson to it on her marriage. Even so the settlement of the estate was not straightforward and Cluny moved back up the line to the present Laird, Robin Linzee Gordon, whose father was a grandson of Fredericka Maria through her second son, and was therefore slightly closer in succession. Mrs Claeson Gordon

retained and sold the Midmar properties. With the advent of Robin Linzee Gordon and his wife Sheena MacLennan a family with young children is living at Cluny for the first time since 1769.

#### THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: 1600–4

The castle built in the early years of the 17th century was not the first building on the Cluny lands. In 1535 an Instrument of Sasine from James V listing the lands that were to be re-granted under a new charter to Lord Huntly includes ‘. . . *et integram proprietam terrarum de Cluny cum lie Piellis earundem. . .*’ Although nothing has so far been discovered of this early Peel its site is likely to have been close to, if not, on, that of the present castle. The old house crowns a small natural *motte*, which before the improvements of the 18th and 19th centuries stood in a wide and boggy hollow watered by the Cluny and the Ton Burns. This is described in the *Statistical Account* (vol X).

The Castle of Cluny has still a double-barred iron gate weighing 32 stones with many bolts and the remains of a fosse once full of water. A large meadow of 100 acres, a great part of which was formerly overflowed, and being a marsh was a defence to the castle is now perfectly dry and fit for tillage.

Such a natural position of strength was unlikely to have been overlooked by the earlier builders, and no doubt Sir Thomas was obliged to demolish the old tower to make way for his fine new building. A building that seen through the words and sketches of James Skene of Rubislaw (Appendix A) has caught the imagination of succeeding generations. These sketches, and the slightly simplified versions of them published by MacGibbon and Ross have formed the basis of the accepted views of the wonders of Cluny, so that succeeding generations have cried ‘*Ichabod – the glory is departed*’. Unfortunately Cluny also caught the imagination of James Skene, and his imagination, naturally fanciful when caught, seldom impinged on fact. His sketches show a building of almost impossible attenuation with a total disregard of the elementary rules of perspective. Admittedly it cannot have been the easiest of buildings to sketch but that cannot excuse the twisting of it so that more could be shown than could ever be seen from any single viewpoint.

This confusion was further compounded. When in the 1830s C Hullmandel published his drawings of various Aberdeenshire castles he included one of Cluny (pl 55a). As this agrees with Skene’s no 4 sketch it has always been regarded as corroborating Skene’s record of what was there. But Hullmandel never saw Cluny as it was; by the time of his visit to the north east John Smith and Colonel Gordon had the rebuilding well in hand. Hullmandel’s drawing in fact is a romantic re-working of Skene’s sketch. In the ‘*Earldom of Mar*’ Dr Douglas Simpson has a footnote in which, whilst accepting the general truth of the drawings he says that ‘*Skene’s hasty sketches are by no means clear in all their details, particularly how the roofs were managed*’, and he includes an illustration which is a re-working of Hullmandel’s and Skene’s drawings by Hugh MacKintosh. This is a very sensitive attempt to rationalise their versions into something a little more practicable.

What was not realised at the time was that two very much more accurate sketches survived of the old castle in the collection of Adam drawings at Sir John Soane’s museum. As these were recorded as ‘*Clunie Castle, Perthshire*’ this is hardly surprising. The indifferent use of *Clunie* and *Cluny* especially when divorced from the patronymic of the appropriate laird is source of endless confusion. As an example of this it is only necessary to quote from a letter written to the Duchess of Gordon by Lieutenant MacKay anent raising a company for the King’s service:

. . . I cannot but own that Clunie has shown himself very forward, only his kinsmen out of respect and reference to your grace and the family of Huntly, to whom they are vassalls, refuse obedience without your grace's order. . . .

Were it not for the appearance of the name *Macpherson* once in the letter there is no reason in the context why it should not apply equally to the *Gordons*.

With however the aid of these two sketches, which show the castle from the SW and SE, of the plans for the additions of 1793, which give a surprising amount of information, and the written description of James Skene, it is possible to form a very clear impression of what the castle must have been like when it was completed in 1604 (pls 47a & 47b).

On plan, at least on the lower floors, it conformed to the standard Z-plan, a central block, 48 ft long by 30 ft wide, with diagonally placed round towers, that at the NW corner being 24 ft in diameter, whilst the SE tower was slightly larger at 25 ft. The accommodation was provided on four floors in the central block and NW tower, and on five floors in the SE tower. Above this was a garret floor and a smaller square tower rising above the main stair, at the junction of the NW tower with the main block.

To this apparently simple building were added a number of curious features which are difficult to parallel exactly elsewhere. The SE tower was not round for its whole height, but changed at the upper level into an irregular heptagon. The SE face of what would otherwise have been a square cap house was canted to give two faces. The angles were carried on sets of deep corbel courses which sprang from a wide but simply moulded course marking the change from round to square. This marked the floor level of the third floor producing a problem in the elevation, as this level would more properly have been at the top course of the corbels supporting the square. The normal practice would have been to omit the string course as was done in a similar case at Druminnor. As it is, the window of the third-floor chamber perches uneasily between the real and apparent floor levels. Above the third-floor window is a small but conspicuous stone oriel designed, according to Skene, to obscure a secret chamber or hiding-place.

Instead of the usual rounds at the free angles of the main block there are square turrets set diagonally with crowsstepped gables and small chimneys.

The NW tower is round for its whole height but increases its girth at the level of the second floor, which is masked by a set of deeply moulded members, with two rows of alternating single corbels. A similar moulded string with a single set of double corbels marks the wall head. This is an unnecessarily elaborate finish to carry the oversailing slate verge courses, and it was probably intended that this tower should finish with lead flats, and a balustraded parapet. Had it done so the resemblance to the round towers at Castle Fraser or Midmar would have been much more marked, – and indeed to Aboyne before it was altered in the 19th century.

By far the most curious element in the composition is the square tower which rises above the roof line. If the Skene sketches are compared carefully with those in the Soane Museum, and with Adam's proposed elevational treatment of the castle it becomes clear that this is formed at the junction of the NW tower and the main block, and is built above the main circular stair. This tower is crowned by a crenellated parapet carried on machicolations, and above it rises the slate-covered roof of its stair turret.

The whole building rises from a strong plinth with a deep chamfered off-set giving a feeling of great strength, which, when contrasted with the complexity of the upper works, albeit in somewhat simpler form than that shown by Skene, produces one of the most satisfying architectural compositions in the whole of the north-east.

The entrance is in the central block at the re-entrant with the NW tower, and thus on the

side away from the causeway. It was defended by an iron yett, presumably the one which, battered and repaired, hangs in the entrance of the walled garden.

The ground floor contained four rooms, two in the main block and one in each of the towers. The vault of the room in the NW tower still survives and it is likely that the whole floor was vaulted until the building was gutted in the 19th century. The kitchen occupied the northern part of the main block with its fireplace and lum in the north gable and a small window in the E wall. Because of this position in the plan there would have been a partition wall built under the vault to provide a lobby for the entrance door, and it is likely that there would have been a serving hatch in this wall. The staircase was to the left of the entrance door in the angle between

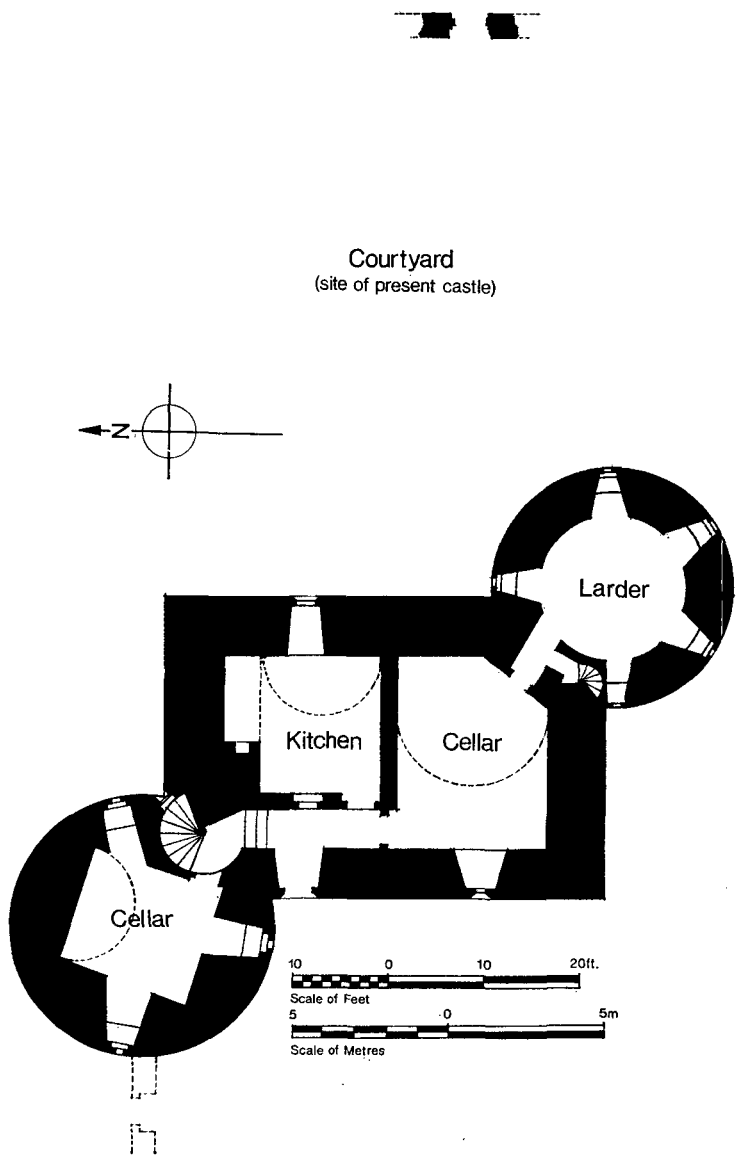


FIG 1 Cluny Castle: c 1604, ground floor

the NW tower and the main block: it was contained largely within the thickness of the wall, and was 9 ft in diameter. It rose from the ground to the third floor in one flight: whilst this is the more usual practice in tower houses it is less usual in Z-houses, where the flight to the first floor is often treated with more importance than the other stairs, and breaks the circulation at the Hall level. A continuous flight is more practical in that the Hall ceases to function as a passage. There is no evidence on any of the sketches or plans to show if Cluny had defensive shot holes and loops, but given the period and the plan adopted it is unlikely that these would have been omitted.

It is clear from the sketches that there were several small buildings attached to or close to the castle and a short length of wall with an arched opening in it – one engraving shows it to have a crenellated parapet – was probably part of the barmekin wall. In the cellarge of the new part of Cluny about 60 feet to the east of the old house is a large opening which may well have been the original entrance to the courtyard, facing as it does the line of the causeway approach. The wall, in which this opening is set, is 30 ins thick, the opening itself is 3 ft 10½ ins wide and 6 ft 7½ ins high with a segmental head – the rere-arch is semi-circular. In the jamb are two 2-in diameter iron pins. These did not carry a wooden door, but a heavy iron yett, the horizontal bars of which extended beyond the outer vertical members. This can be seen by the square housings for them which are cut in the jamb. The height of the rere-arch, and the depth of the inner jamb show that there may have been a massive timber inner door as well.

The first floor presents no surprises; a square reception or business room in the NW tower separated from the Hall by the principal staircase, the Hall occupying the whole of the square tower, and a Withdrawing Room in the SE tower. The staircase projected slightly into the Hall and this may have meant a buffet was formed at the lower end. The fireplace seems to have been at the high end in the S wall. Light was provided from two large windows in the W wall, with possibly another in the N wall. The Adam plans suggest that there may have been a small circular stair within the wall thickness between the square and SE towers giving access from the Hall to the cellars. Between the Hall and the Withdrawing Room was a much larger stair, corbelled out in the usual manner. This probably gave access to both rooms, and served as a passage-way linking them. The Adam plan shows a difference in level between them which would have been easier to accommodate on the staircase than in a direct lobby.

Skene is a little out in his dimensions of the Hall which he gives as ‘*only 25 ft by 18*’. It is in fact rather bigger, measuring 34 ft by 21 ft.

The two bedroom floors are planned alike with a chamber in each of the towers, and two chambers in the square tower, all with closets and fireplaces, the flues in the square tower being gathered into one immense chimney stack in the E wall.

As at Castle Fraser the fenestration changes on the third floor, there being four small windows hard against the wall head in contrast to the larger and more widely spaced windows on the lower floors. It is on this floor too that we can see the truth of Skene’s comment that:

*‘. . . throughout the interior is an intricate maze of small apartments, passages and holes in the wall’.*

From the purely conventional view the most interesting feature on this floor is the substitution of square turrets set on the diagonal in place of the usual rounds. These are in reality something rather more than closets for closed stools, each one measuring 6 ft by 5 ft and being supplied with small fireplaces. Square turrets of course occur at Glenbucket, Pitfichie and Midmar, and were intended at Craigston; it is being set diagonally that makes the Cluny ones so distinctive.

It is at the third floor that the design of Cluny departs from convention and almost justifies one of Skene’s most flowing periods:



'... the architect was willing only to exhibit the extent of bizarre contrivance of which his art was capable. There is throughout the whole a system of seemingly sportive angling and counter angling which, at the same time that it is highly favourable to the purposes of picturesque effect, takes the most ingenious advantage of the strong points for support, while to the eye the works appear suspended by magnetical if not magical influence.'

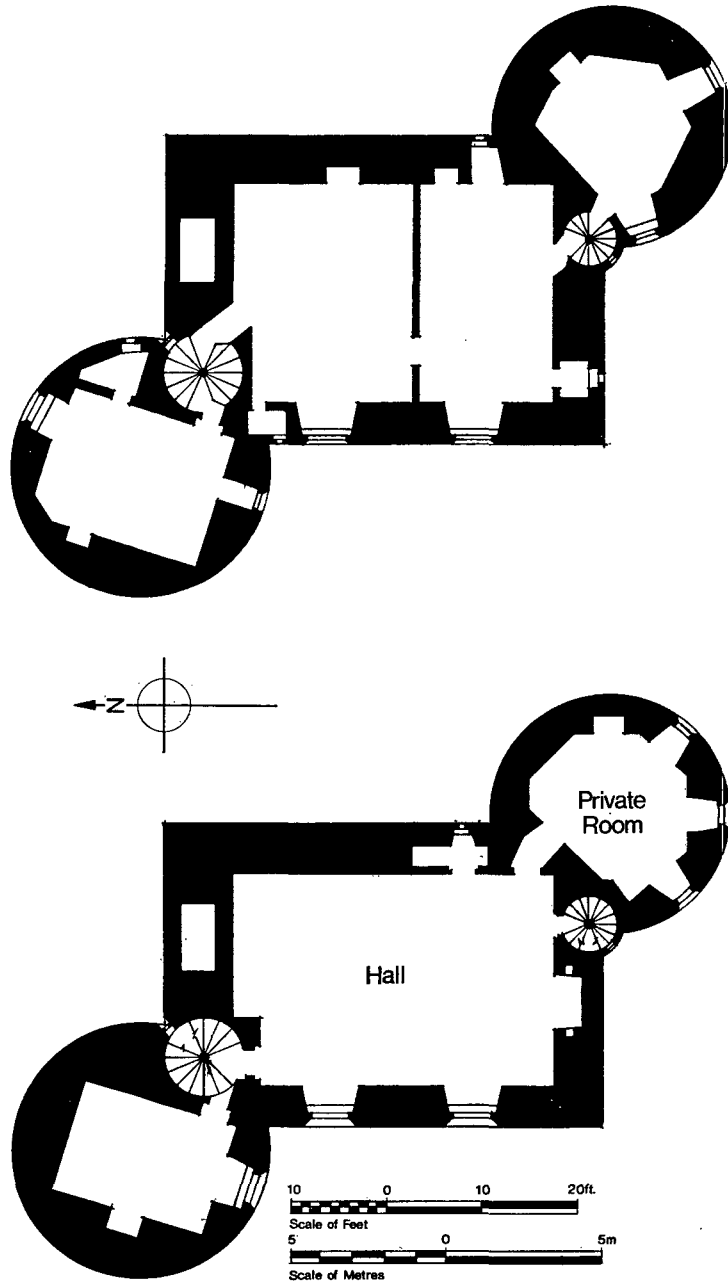


FIG 2 Cluny Castle: c 1604 first and second floors

As the two staircases from the lower floors rise no higher, new staircases are necessary to reach the upper floors, and these are provided. One, in the N gable gives access to the square watch tower. This is shown by Adam to be in the thickness of the wall: Skene's sketches show a turret stair against the side of the Watch Tower which springs either from the third floor level *or* from the wall head level. The correct answer is that the stair shown by Adam led to the lower chamber in the tower, and a separate turret stair was then corbelled out to give access to the upper floor and the roof.

A second, and very small stair is fitted into the thickness of the N wall of the square tower so that the roof space over that part of the building could be reached.

The third stair apparently was formed in the thickness of the wall at the junction of the square tower and the SE tower, and opening out of the tower chamber. This was the only way of entering the square cap house that crowned this tower.

The most extraordinary feature is however the chimney chamber off the third-floor chamber in the SE tower. Skene describes this:

'Near the top of this tower on the obtuse angle from which it is bevelled is attached a sort of small ornamented tribune of solid masonry all round, which externally appears to be merely a piece of architectural decoration corresponding to the grotesque character of the whole building, but internally serves a singular purpose and to which intent it was probably contrived. The angular form of the front of the tower occasions an additional thickness of wall at that part, as the apartments within are circular, the flues from the fireplace are constructed in this angle, and means are contrived by which a person may without difficulty ascend one of the chimneys, where at the height of a few feet within the vent, a door presents itself, opening into a concealed apartment within the tribune mentioned above. The door is so adjusted as to prevent the intrusion of smoke from the chimney into which it opens, and the ornamented cornice of the tribune externally gives an opportunity of the admission of light and air without any opening being discernible without. And with a good fire blazing in the chimney below it certainly [would] never occur to any successful assailant of the castle to search for his enemy in the chimney, where, nevertheless, with a competent provision of food he might manage to continue long enough sheltered.'

The imagination is confounded. To build a secret chamber and then mark its position by the most conspicuous and unusual feature on the exterior is incredible, but what other explanation fits? It is hardly a safe place for plate or papers; it apparently is smoke-proof so it is useless for curing hams, even though it might well lead to kippering its unfortunate inmate.

Whatever its use, its derivation is clear. Its form, both from Skene's sketches and other drawings is distinct: a small five-sided oriel, carried on corbelled courses, and panelled in two tiers, the lower solid and the upper, also solid, representing windows. The whole crowned by a sloping stone roof. Oriels as a feature are extremely rare in Scotland, but in the NE there is a very fine set at Huntly Castle which was added in the alterations of 1602-6, and which is similar to, albeit much grander than, that at Cluny. Sir Thomas Gordon and the Marquess of Huntly were cousins and were no doubt aware of each others building works, and Huntly must have served as the model.

The access to the square Watch Tower and the arrangement of the stairs have already been considered and the possibility that the NW tower was originally roofed with a lead flat and finished with a balustraded parapet has been touched on. The fashion for high, view-commanding rooms was not confined to the great houses of England or of southern Scotland. Similar arrangements certainly pertained at Craigston, Craigievar and Castle Fraser, and probably at many

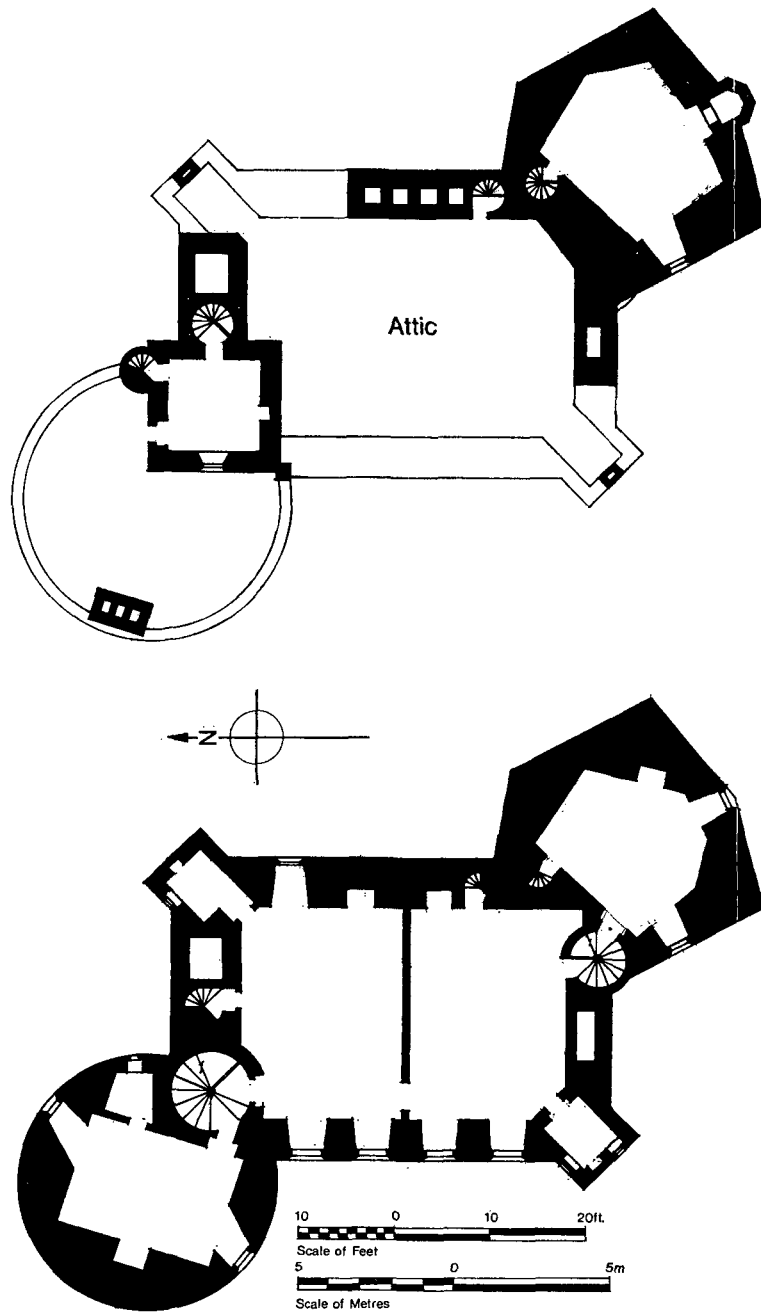


FIG 3 Cluny Castle: c 1604 third & attic floors

other houses. At Craigston this is combined with a readily accessible retiring room, and it is likely that this was the intended use of this tower at Cluny.

Who the designer of Cluny was is not known, but both from its dates and its general character it belongs firmly to the group of castles in Midmar – Castle Fraser, Midmar and Tilly-

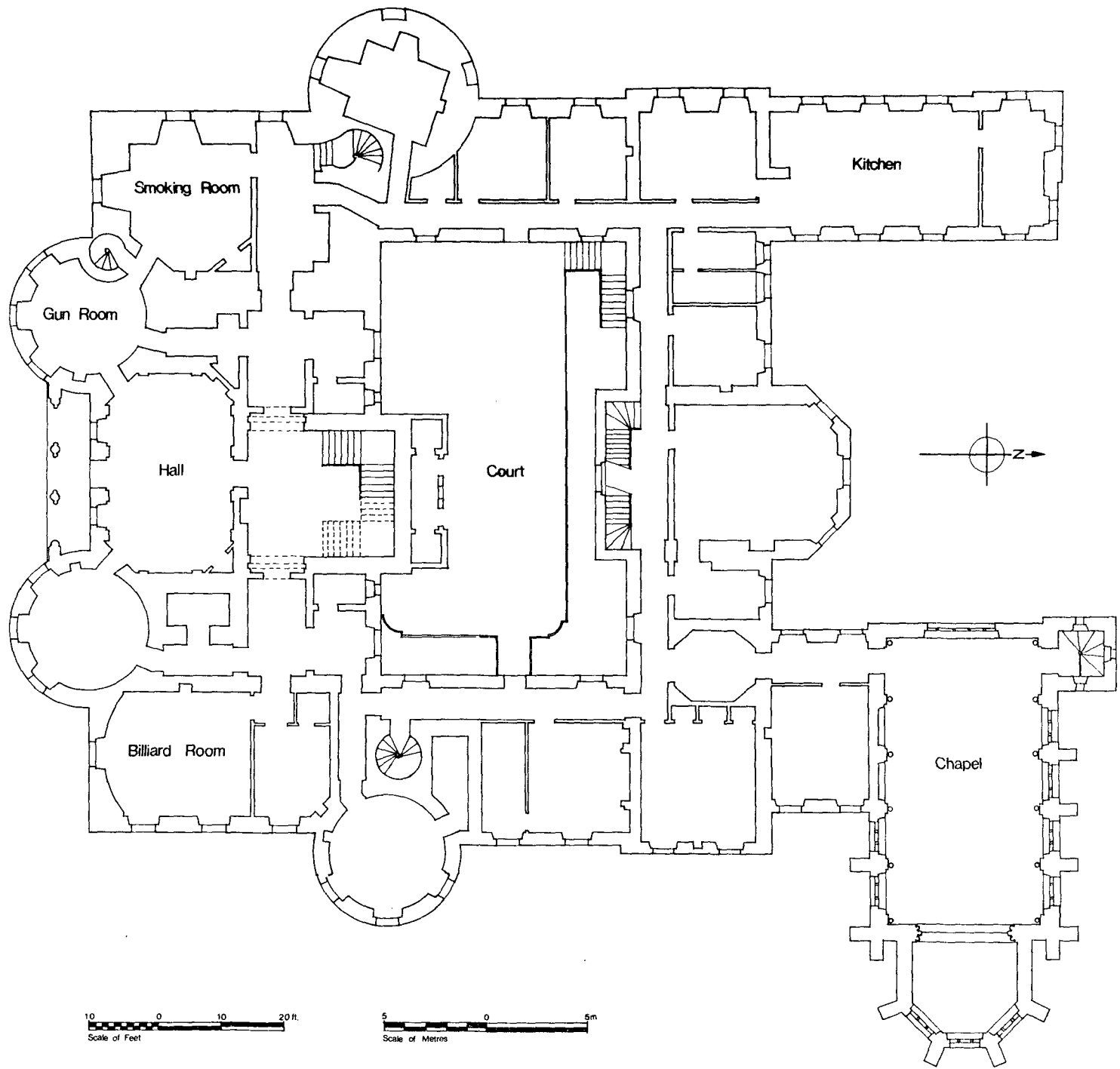


FIG 4 Cluny Castle: ground floor c 1872

cairn – associated with the Bell family. The most likely candidate is John Bell who designed Castle Fraser. The only feature alien to what we know of his work is the oriel on the SE tower, but this may well have been a personal whim of Sir Thomas Gordon.

#### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: William Adam's designs 1790–1793

In the Clerk of Pennicuik papers [SRO LD 18/4965] are an estimate and specification dated 1790 for additions and alterations to Cluny Castle at the cost of £2,724.8.8½ for Mr Baron Cosmo Gordon, and in the Soane Museum collection of Adam drawings (vol 1, 112–113 and vol XXXIV, 79–85) are drawings, the first two being sketches of the old castle, the remainder being plans, sections and elevations of what was proposed and dated 1793. For many years these drawings had been listed as *Clunie–Perthshire* but with the recognition of this error it is possible to bring all the material together and consider what was intended (pls 49–53).

As the specification and estimate are dated *1 Sept 1790* there must have been an earlier set of drawings, prepared under Robert Adam's supervision, than the surviving set of *5 January 1793*. These were probably prepared the year after his death, under the supervision of James Adam, or of John Paterson, although they accord closely with the earlier document, and were probably only a re-drawing of the originals. Mrs Gordon had died in 1791 yet her room is still shown somewhat tactlessly on the plans. It was probably her death that led Cosmo Gordon finally to abandon his intention of re-building Cluny.

The Adam plan shows the same basic principle that was to govern the two later designs for Cluny, to use the original Z tower as the dominant element in the plan and to copy it. In this case a replica of the square block and NW tower was repeated, even to matching of the angled square turret of the SW angle and repeating it on the SE angle. The great SE tower was common to both blocks and became the central feature of the extended S front. The entrance was moved to the E front and a service wing, making use of the fall of the ground, was built to the north.

In the chapter on *Robert Adam's Northern Castles* in his *Gothic Revival 1745–1845* James Macaulay has discussed the development of Adam's castle style and his increasing use of Scottish motifs, but as far as the planning and massing of these northern castles are concerned these details might just as well have been Classical, Pompeian, or Byzantine. They remain only trappings; the houses that they decorated are firmly rooted in the 18th century. Certainly none of them are markedly influenced by their predecessors. His patrons obviously wanted splendid new houses with handsomely decorated suites of rooms with the interesting subtleties of planning of which Adam was such a master. That they should emphasise the ancient splendour or present respectability of their owners went without saying. And if the smartest architect in the three kingdoms could produce, with the aid of his new castellated style, a house which could, in the politest way, suggest itself as a suitable setting for *Douglas* and cry '*My name is Norval*' from every turret and battlement so much the better.

For some reason this does not seem to be the truth of what controlled the decision at Cluny. Whether the fact that he was only the second generation of a family of little distinction, which had acquired Cluny following the ruin of its previous owners, or whether he was conscious of his descent, albeit illegitimate, from Alexander Gordon, 1st of Cluny, Cosmo Gordon wanted more than just the trappings of medievalism. He was determined, and it must have been his determination rather than that of his architect, that the home of his, or some one else's ancestors, should survive. Even the outline of the building was preserved, – apart from lowering of the SE

tower and rebuilding it to the height of the new NE tower – with its strange flying towers and turrets, although these were not all repeated on the new building. The preservation of the old tower, with its immensely thick walls, awkward junctions, circular stairs and changes of levels, with its consequent compartmentation, prevent a felicitous development of the plan. Where fanciful shapes are used they appear contrived as if at a decorator's whim. However within these constraints Adam managed to design a scheme that was neither totally unmanageable nor excessively inconvenient, except for the servants.

On the ground floor, except for the Entrance Hall and Staircase the accommodation was entirely given over to the servants. The old entrance door now led into the Servants Hall, and the only apparent alteration to the cellarage of the old house was the removal of the wall between the kitchen and passage in order to make the Servants Hall of reasonable dimensions. Between the old and new houses there was a small courtyard for light and ventilation.

In the new house the ground floor contained the Butler's Room and Pantry as well as the Entrance Hall and Staircase, together with two servants' rooms in the tower, opening off the Stair Hall. The Entrance Hall was rectangular with a round-headed semi-circular recess facing the front door, which contained a closed stove (a similar stove is shown in one of the servants' halls). Between the Hall and Staircase was a columned screen, and the Stair Hall, lit by windows in the N wall had semi-circular ends. The Staircase itself was of one continuous flight between floors, with cantilevered treads of polished Hails stone, moulded on the nosings and ends. The balustrade was of iron and plain with a mahogany handrail, and a hanging lamp with a double pulley lit the stair-well at night.

The service wing was neither elaborate or extensive. At the lower level were the Coal, Ash, Peat and Wood Cellars, whilst above at ground floor level were the Bake House, Kitchen, and Cooks Closet, two small closets, and an unnamed room – presumably the Scullery mentioned in the specification. Opening off the small courtyard and completing this range were the Madeira Cellar – which contained nine bins or catacombs and a large larder. This is shown having a central apartment with a surrounding walkway, and in the specification it was Baron Gordon's responsibility to provide the inner partitions and Tirlesses – or wire screens – necessary. It was a *larder* in the old sense of the word, a place for the keeping of meat, fish and game.

The external elevation of this wing is the nearest approach at Cluny to Adam's normal castellated style. It is divided into three bays by four false turrets. The lower walls are battered and four blind crosslet loops add to the illusion. Behind and above this is an arched and corbelled structure, 32 ft high and 18 ft across. It is decorated with a shield and its purpose appears to have been to carry the Servants' Dinner Bell: small wonder it need an Iron Stay Barr  $1\frac{1}{2}$  In Square to steady it.

The first floor was given over entirely to the public rooms of the house. Except for re-decoration the rooms in the old tower were hardly touched, and even this was sparing, for the old hearths and jambs were not to be removed if they were '*found to answer*'.

From the stair landing three doors opened: one into Mrs Gordon's Sitting-Room, one into the Drawing-Room, and one into the Ante-Room to the Dining-Room. Mrs Gordon's Sitting-Room in the NE tower was circular with an enriched cornice. The Drawing-Room, a large room with segmental ends, was to have an enriched frieze, cornice and astragal, and both rooms were to have their walls papered. These two rooms were not to have jambs and hearths of polished Hails stone, which was standard throughout the new addition, but were to be finished separately by Baron Gordon at his own expense.

Because this was the one floor in the old house where there was some consistency in the floor levels it was possible to provide a secondary circulation between the Drawing-Room and

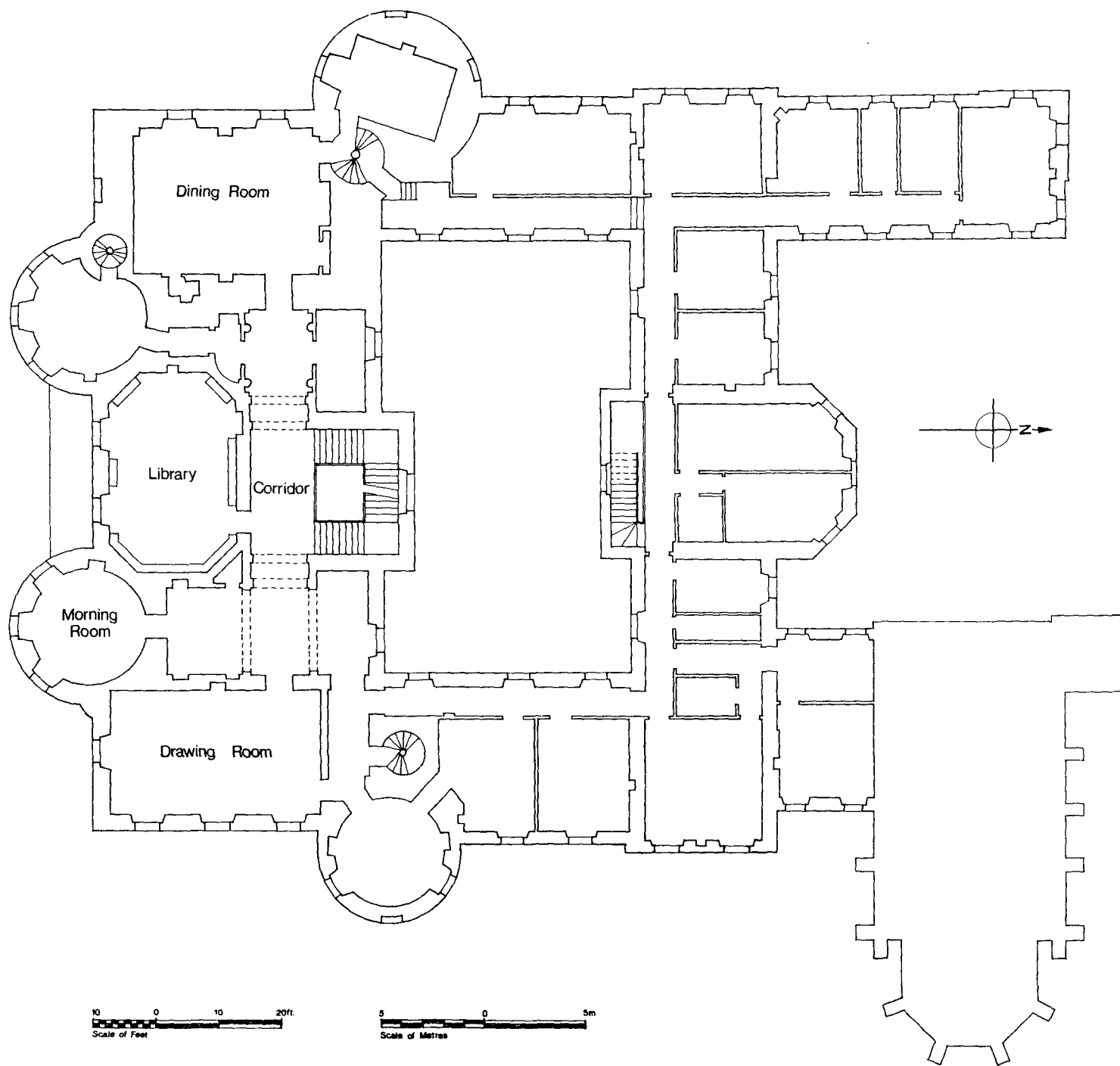


FIG 5 Cluny Castle: first floor c 1872

the Dining-Room (formerly the Hall) by way of a Book Closet inserted between the two main blocks and the SE tower.

The two bedroom floors are each planned to contain two suites of rooms, with additional bedchambers in the NE and NW towers.

On the first floor the room in the NE tower is the most carefully planned in the house. By creating four closets the circular space has been given a central square, crowned by a shallow plaster cross vault, and four shallow segmental recesses for the door, window, fireplace and bed. The suite in the new addition consists of a Bedchamber, Dressing-Room, and Powdering-Room and was presumably the principal guest suite. The suite in the old tower was much larger. It consisted of a good sized Bed Chamber separated by a Closet from the stair landing. Within it were a Dressing-Room and Servant's Room and a small lobby giving access to Mrs Gordon's Bedroom in the SE tower.

The floor above was planned in a similar way, save that the rooms were slightly different shapes, and that the suite in the new house consisted of a Bedchamber and Bedroom and a Servant's Room.

By use of the existing spiral stairs it was possible to gain access to the 'Servants' rooms *within*' without having to cross any other rooms. To prevent the constant carrying of scuttles up and down stairs there are fuel closets on each floor in the old house adjacent to the back stairs.

Two interesting points emerge from the planning of the upper floors, particularly the two suites in the old house. The first is the use of the two terms '*Bedchamber*' and '*Bedroom*'. This possibly points to a distinction of use in that the latter was for sleeping only, whilst the former had an element of day or living use in it. The other is that there is a somewhat old fashioned note in the sequence of rooms. From the staircase the Bedchamber is entered through a Closet (or Ante-room), beyond the Bedchamber is the smaller and more intimate Dressing-Room which in turn leads to the ultimate privacy of Mrs Gordon's Bedroom – a sequence of Common-Good-Better-Best reminiscent of the axis of honour in the formal houses of the previous century.

The reason for this anachronistic planning – after all the year was 1790 – together with the retention of so much of the old house, must lie in the nature and character of Mr Baron Cosmo Gordon.

#### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: c 1816

In the *Paul Mellon Collection* at Yale are some drawings bought from John Harris and attributed to William Wilkins. One of them is incorrectly labelled *Floor plan for Castle Fraser* (pl 54). It is in fact the ground floor of Cluny showing a proposed scheme of alterations and additions planned some time in the early 19th century, and somewhere perhaps the remaining drawings of this set survive. It is unlikely to have been commissioned before 1814, the year in which Charles Gordon of Braid and Cluny died, and is probably Colonel John Gordon's first plan for enlarging his house. If it is really the work of Wilkins a date between 1814 and 1818 would be likely. He was working on Dalmeny, for Lord Rosebery, between 1814 and 1817, and may have produced proposals for altering Castle Fraser 1818–19. Certainly a date later than 1818 is unlikely as by then John Smith seems to have become associated with Cluny.

The '*Wilkins*' design as far as can be judged from the one known surviving plan, is a development of Robert Adam's unexecuted proposals. The house again is an enlargement of the old Z-tower to a nearly square block, the existing SE tower becoming the focal point of the new principal elevation, a large NW tower being added to the NW corner of the new eastern half of



the house, and the kitchen and offices occupying two floors to the north where use could be made of the steep fall in the ground.

This retention of the basic elements of Adam's plan, the dominant element of the round towers, and the form of the principal entrance, which, with its deeply curved surround, is reminiscent of Miss Eliza's door at Castle Fraser suggests that Adam's old clerk of works and successor in the castellated field, John Paterson, may have been responsible for this design. In discussing Castle Fraser (*Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 109, 1977–78, 233–300) I doubted the likelihood of Paterson being the designer of the entrance door there, but in light of this and other drawings in the *Paul Mellon Collection* I would revise that judgement. If in fact Paterson is the designer it means that this work could be dated to the last years of the 18th century between the death of Robert Adam in 1792 and that of Cosmo Gordon in 1800. On the whole though the likelihood is that it was between the years 1814–17 following Colonel John's succession that this second scheme was commissioned, when Paterson was still active.

The planning of the *Paterson-Wilkins* house, at least as far as can be judged from the ground floor, aimed at a simpler and more direct approach, although this was not without its embarrassments.

The focal point of the main elevation was the old SE tower to which the principal entrance had been moved. This was placed on the main axis of the extended house and given flanking windows, and a curved surround similar to that at Castle Fraser. It opened into the base of the tower which was altered to form a circular entrance hall. Beyond this was a vaulted inner hall of two bays leading to the staircase. Unfortunately it was not possible to preserve the external axial symmetry internally. Because of the thickness of the walls of the old house the doorway to the inner hall had to be offset; in order to preserve symmetry at all costs a balancing doorway was introduced and an unattended visitor had the choice of the inner hall or a water closet both seemingly of equal architectural importance.

To the right of the inner hall was a large room which seems to have been designed as a billiard-room. Opening off the staircase hall at the foot of stairs was a doorway leading into the ground floor of the old castle. One end of this was partitioned off to form an entrance lobby to the larger room within. This room was of some importance for its entry was contrived from the public rather than the service parts of the house, and the partition at its lower end was dignified by a pair of doorways. Beyond the lobby lay two serving rooms with access to the kitchen wing, and if not the dining-room it may have been the family breakfast-room.

At the back of the staircase hall and under the quarter landings were three doorways. One gave access to a self-contained suite of three rooms – one of which was a bedroom – and an unlit closet. Of the other two one led to the service rooms behind the dining-room, whilst the other led to the T-shaped kitchen wing.

The kitchen wing was planned with a ruthless disregard for the lie of the land. The short leg of the T was flanked by two open courtyards standing at least ten feet above ground level, which would have required a prodigious deal of filling and making up. The leg of the 'T' was occupied by a broad corridor with closets (water or earth), stairs to the cellars, and two cupboards on one side. In the head of the T was the kitchen with a huge canted bay, the bake house, and laundry house (one of the courtyards presumably being a drying yard), and two smaller rooms. Staircases led to accommodation on the floor above, and presumably there was stabling beneath.

The only clue to the architectural character of this design is that the older part of the castle has been refenestrated, and that all the windows have masonry transoms. But this indicates that it was to be suitably Baronial.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY 1818–40: John Smith

Cluny as we know it today is largely the work of John Smith, although if his drawings survive they have not so far been discovered and the documentary evidence is tantalisingly small. It is to be found in his Account Books, now in the possession of the National Monuments Record of Scotland, and in some letters of Colonel John Gordon which have survived at Cluny.

Apart from a pencilled abstract of a list of drawings of various houses which is found in Book VIII, and which records against Cluny *Elevation* and *Porter's Lodge*, there are only four other entries, all in Book IX.

The first of these records that on 7 April 1824  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft of  $\frac{5}{8}$  Wainscott,  $11\frac{3}{4}$  ft of  $\frac{3}{4}$  in Memel, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  doz of  $\frac{5}{8}$  screws were provided. Two years later the sum of £1.1.0 was expended on the *Use of Blocks and Ropes*. On 27 July 1828 comes the longest entry:

*Cluny: Pattern for beam*  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ft  $1\frac{3}{4}$  deal  $15\frac{1}{2}$  ft  $1\frac{1}{2}$  do  
 $20\frac{1}{2}$  ft 1 in do.  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  lb 16p nails.  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb 10p do. 1 lb 6p do.  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb  $\frac{1}{2}$  in brads

And in September 1831 Smith notes that he was at Cluny measuring and inspecting masonry. Thus he recorded the building of one of the largest houses in Aberdeenshire. It would hardly be possible to build a bothie on less.

In 1832 the castle was still not completed, although work was sufficiently advanced for it to be habitable. Four letters written in October and November of that year, part of a collection of letters from Colonel Gordon to his daughter, Mary, who was dying of consumption, contain references to work at the castle. Work had been going on for eight years and reading between the lines of Colonel Gordon's letter it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that much of the delay was due to his own tendency to meddle and interfere.

*20th October 1831*

. . . Much has been done in the interior of the Castle since I left it; – some parts well enough, others not at all to my mind – it is not improbable I may order what is objectionable to be undone, and all operations suspended when I go away. . . .

. . . . The most ludicrous piece of News I have heard, since I left you, is the current Report in these parts of my just going to be Married to Miss d'Este Daughter of the Duke of Sussex – a Lady whom I never saw in my life to my Knowledge.

- The Colonel was obviously in the habit of overseeing the work and creating the maximum upheaval at the worst moments. Nobody in his right mind would interfere in a building programme in Aberdeenshire with winter setting in. Possibly the thought of Miss d'Este, and her Royal connections, was unnerving for worse was to come.

*1st November 1832*

The Carpenters here are so loving (?) a concern during the Frosty days, that I have ordered them all to be dismissed, after this week, except the Two Best Hands. . . .

. . . . There are no Silk Bound Boots in the Drawers in your Bed Room. I found some in my own, and some in the School Room.

Unfortunate Carpenters to be turned off, and the subjects of the Colonel's irony. Clearly the house was habitable although there seems to have been a degree of domestic confusion.

At last Mr Smith makes his appearance, or rather his non-appearance which is as frustrating to the student as it was infuriating to his employer.

4th November 1832

And as you are going on so well and my mind greatly at ease, I mean to defer my departure till Friday, which will give me an opportunity of having out Mr Smith, the Architect, and settling what may be safely gone on with in my absence'.

Six days later he was however forced to write

10th November 1832

Mr Smith did not make his appearance yesterday, and it is possible he may not come to-day either, in which case nothing can be settled as I take my departure to-morrow. . . .

No doubt John Smith felt that he would see the Colonel in Edinburgh sooner than at Cluny, for quite clearly it must have been impossible to keep to any sort of programme if work was constantly being taken down and men dismissed. Four letters in two months may not seem very much, but if this had been going on for eight years it is surprising that any progress had been made at all.

The house that John Smith designed for Colonel Gordon was considerably more ambitious than either of the two preceding schemes for enlargement. Like them its starting point was the old Z castle, and indeed Smith preserved to a certain extent the fantastic profile of the 1604 building so that even today Cluny is one of the oddest houses in the north-east, with the most extraordinary array of turrets and towers. His scheme involved building a replica of the old tower someway to the east of its predecessor and linking the two by a central block. Taking advantage of the fall in the ground he placed a service court behind the main house, which he then surrounded by three-storied service and secondary wings which emphasised the height and bulk of the main house. Further to the north a range of stables and carriage houses was built.

The whole is faced in finely wrought and closely jointed silver-grey granite. The windows are sashes, those on the ground floor being round-headed whilst the remainder are square-headed with hood moulding and labels. The parapets generally are crenellated; those on the two towers of the south front being carried on deep corbels which give the effect of machicolations. Elsewhere the moulded corbel courses are mildly classical with only the occasional rope moulding to hint at a 17th-century Aberdeenshire provenance. The exception to this is the north-east tower of the new S-wing, which is dignified by a gargantuan band of diaper work. The square angle turrets are reproduced but without their gabled roofs so that much of their effect is lost. Between the towers of the entrance front is a three-bay portico of almost 16th century detailing but entirely classical in feeling. The effect of this is marred by the two upper floors being of only two bays; the result is that instead of having a strong central element the main elevation tends to pull apart.

In spite of its trappings of towers and turrets, battlements and corbels, Cluny externally is not a Gothic revival house – indeed it is barely Gothic. It is really an overgrown picturesquely classical house with baronial trimmings; much nearer in style and feeling to a house such as Castle Forbes than to Smith's later Tudorish houses. Dr James Macaulay trounces Smith severely for producing this archaic design. Such a trouncing might have been deserved had the design of Cluny dated from 1836; but this was the date of its completion and as has been shown it was a long time in building. The first dated reference that can be connected with Smith is that recording *wainscot* and *Memel* in 1824 and that suggests that the carcass of the house was in being by then. Allowing for the delays likely to have arisen from Colonel Gordon's propensity to interfere a design date of not later than 1820 would not be unreasonable.

Whatever reservations there may be about Smith's handling of the exterior and his destructive re-casing of the old castle – although the latter was more likely to have been the whim of Colonel Gordon rather than Smith's wish – there can be little but praise for his planning and handling of the interior. That is if one discounts the inconvenience of hot food leaving the

Kitchen and arriving cool in the Dining-Room, or the high incidence of breakages to both servants and crockery due to all the service stairs being spiral and of stone.

Colonel Gordon, although the father of four children, was unmarried, and this is very much reflected in the interiors. There is an air of uncompromising masculinity which has not been displaced entirely in spite of the efforts of his son's second wife. Nor is it a young house; at the time it was building Colonel Gordon's youngest daughter was dying, indeed she was to die before its completion, and it was not until the incoming of the present laird, Robin Linzee Gordon, that there have ever been children at the present castle: it is a curiously staid house although this atmosphere is changing.

The interior of the house as planned by John Smith shows the function of its parts remarkably well defined. The ground floor is a male preserve with gun-room, smoking-room, billiard-room and business-room. On the first floor are the drawing-rooms and boudoir, separated from the dining- and breakfast-rooms by the library, and on the second floor are the bedrooms. On each floor is a noble corridor decorated in a suitable style. Linking the three floors is the huge open staircase. Unfortunately Smith's decoration of this disappeared in the 1860s. The wings surrounding the courtyard were gutted by fire in 1926 so it is impossible to say what Smith's arrangements were in these save that the kitchen was as far from the dining-room as possible, without actually becoming farcical.

The entrance hall with canted ends is in the Roman Doric manner – there is no hint of Gothic once the front door is closed – with the walls divided by pink granite pilasters, and a simply beamed and coffered ceiling. In the SW corner a doorway leads to the gunroom and smoking-room, which are in the basement of the old castle, and in the SE corner another doorway leads to what was probably the business-room in the base of one of the new towers. Beyond this, but more easily accessible from the corridor lies the billiard-room.

Facing the front door is a doorway leading to the inner hall and staircase. This doorway is not on the axis of the inner hall or of the ascending flight: as in the earlier proposals for Cluny the immense thickness of the walls of the old house forced Smith to move his staircase off-centre in order to achieve symmetrical flanking corridors.

At first sight it may seem strange that the billiard-room, although on the ground floor, should be so removed from those other two male preserves, the gun-room and the smoking-room. Certainly by the second half of the century one would have expected to find these rooms together. In the first part of the century billiards had not become associated entirely with men, and if women were to play it was desirable that the billiard-room should not be associated with the smoking-room. Smith achieves this by placing the billiard-room on the ground floor but at the opposite end of the corridor to the smoking-room.

The trim throughout the ground floor is extremely simple; the only emphasis, and as it is Romanish Doric, it is a very understated emphasis, is confined to the halls and the corridor. The cornices are simple and the chimney-pieces, which are of granite, could hardly be plainer, although those in the circular rooms are concave to follow the curve of the walls.

On the first floor the order chosen for the corridor is Composite with a consoled and dentilled cornice – richer and more suitable for the principal floor, but even here it is not used extravagantly. As well as pilasters Smith used engaged columns to dignify the end of the corridor which formed the approach to the dining-room, as at this point the junction with the old house produced problems.

It is in his handling of the corridor that Smith produces the most effective interior at Cluny, although it has suffered from the re-decoration of the staircase. The corridor is 58 ft in length and 12 ft in breadth, divided into three sections, the centre one being 20 ft long, the two end ones

14 ft long, and the divisions being marked by pilastered and beamed semi-screen bays. The staircase which is of three flights and rises the full height of the house occupies the whole of one side of the central section of the corridor. By careful handling of his spaces Smith so contrives them that this central division when viewed from the staircase or when used as a full landing appears to be part of the staircase enclosure and not of the corridor, yet when seen from either end of the corridor or used as part of the corridor becomes a complete entity with it, and the staircase disappears.

The whole of this floor of the main house was given over to public and living rooms. The drawing-room occupied the square block of the new Z house, with a smaller withdrawing-room in the NE tower, accessible from the drawing-room, and a morning-room in the SW tower. Above the hall and linking the two Z houses is the library, which retains the fittings and bookcases designed for it. At the western end of the corridor a columned lobby leads into the dining-room which was originally the hall of the old castle. This room is dignified by a deeply coffered ceiling decorated with small drops at the intersection of the beams.

The function of the two rooms in the round towers of the older part of the house is uncertain. That in the NW tower because of its proximity to the dining-room and such convenience of service as there was would in all probability have been the breakfast-room, whilst that in the SE tower with its staircase access to the gun-room and smoking-room may have been the laird's private room or study.

Apart from the corridor, and the ceiling of the dining-room the trim of this floor is treated very simply although marble was used for the library chimney piece. The decorations of the drawing-room and morning-room belong to a later period.

The second floor is devoted to bedrooms, and boasts an equally fine corridor to the floor below. Here the pilasters are rich with honeysuckle, acroteri and acanthus capitals, whilst the ceiling is divided into panels enriched with egg-and-dart mouldings. There was provision for eight bedrooms on this floor, three of them provided with dressing-rooms – even though one is but an unlit fired closet. The two largest, and presumably the most important, each with its dressing-room, occupy the square blocks of the Z towers. That in the old house was presumably Colonel Gordon's as the staircase from the gun-room and study opens into the dressing-room lobby.

Because of the alterations carried out by John Gordon in the 1860s and the destructive fire of 1926 the original arrangements of first floor in the wings around the courtyard is not clear but presumably Smith intended them to be bedroom accommodation, although at what social level is uncertain.

#### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: 1858–1878

It would have been thought that Cluny as enlarged by Colonel Gordon would have been big enough to have satisfied any reasonable man, and at first John Gordon was content with his enormous house. However having acquired a taste for expensive litigation, and a second wife – he had lost his first wife in 1864 and had married again the following year – there was no reason why he should not indulge in a third expensive luxury and make extensive alterations and additions to the castle.

In the existing house his work is to be seen in the redecoration of the staircase and of the morning-room. The staircase as left by Smith was of stone with, presumably, a simple iron balustrade that would not clash with the three different schemes of decorations in the corridors. In the alterations the stairs were encased in wood and the balustrade and handrail were removed.

To replace them was provided a rich pierced and carved confection in a species of Carolean-Rococo, with Jacobean newels. Handsome enough in its own way, but it suffers by comparison with Smith's work. It probably dates from 1867 or early in 1868. John Gordon's marriage with Emily Eliza Steel Pringle had taken place late in December 1865, and at Cluny there is still a dinner service dating from March 1868 and decorated with the same monogram that is used on the staircase – two intertwined 'G's. The redecoration of the morning-room in the round tower dates from this period. It was given a carved marble chimney piece in the French taste – frivolous by Cluny standards – and hung with pleated silk. This silk which has been dated to the late 1860s is decorated with small flowered sprigs; it is in the one truly feminine room in the house.

A large addition was made to the NW corner of the service wing which had the effect of moving the kitchen yet further from the dining-room – 137 ft of corridors with 14 ft of unlit spiral staircase between the kitchen table and the dinner table. This was in the same style as the earlier building.

At the NE corner of the house an even larger addition was made. This contained a tenants' hall on the basement level, and a chapel on the first floor. Access was by means of a stair in a turret at the NE corner or from the ground floor passage in the E wing. A linking block was added between the chapel and Smith's building, which probably provided accommodation for the visiting clergy.

The chapel consists of a nave of five bays with a short sanctuary terminated by a three-sided apse. The windows are of three lights with mildly 16th-century freestone tracery, and there is a large rose window in the west gable. The foundation stone was laid in 1870 and a water colour of the interior dated 1873 and initialled JM suggests that it was completed in the latter year. This drawing and a contemporary description give an idea of the splendour of the interior:

'On the north-east corner a small connecting and cross building was built in 1876, which contains on the upper floor the private sanctuary of the family, and is fitted up inside in a gorgeous style of church architecture. The floor is laid with rich encaustic tiles and seated with dark carved oak benches, open oak roof which rests upon faint pink-coloured polished Corennie granite pilasters (which have a rather sickly appearance), and profusely ornamented with gilded cornices, scrolls, etc, which must have cost many a thousand pound.'

The drawing supports this description but also shows the glass in the windows to have been as it is now, heraldic in the nave with the arms and initials of John Gordon and Emily Pringle, and depicting in the upper lights in the sanctuary scenes from the passion of Our Lord, and in the lower lights scenes from His life. After the fire these windows were replaced, apparently from the original cartoons, by the firm of Clayton and Bell. The whole effect of the chapel under its great oak hammer-beam roof was extremely rich, and it is to be regretted that after the fire it was decided not to restore the decorations to the original design.

## POST-1878 AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Two years after the death of John Gordon in 1878 his widow re-married, choosing as her husband Sir Reginald Cathcart of Killochan. For the rest of the century little to the advantage though much to the detriment of Cluny was done. None of the work was of a major nature, mostly consisting of finding room for additional pipes, sinks, and closets, except for a clumsy addition which was tacked onto the back of the main house to improve the circulation between the first floor rooms and the W service wing by by-passing the dining-room.

However, late in the 19th century or early in the 20th the large drawing-room was redecorated.

The style chosen was Adam-ish. James Macaulay has suggested that this work might be by John Smith, who certainly used neo-Adam detailing at Castle Forbes and Raemoir. But this is unlikely; it would have struck a false note at variance with Smith's other work at Cluny, it is coarse in comparison with other work in this style by him – rather as if applied by a very superior pastry cook – and it is clear that the decoration on the doors has been overlaid on the earlier work. Indeed the whole room forcibly calls to mind the lines of W S Gilbert:

Rare oriental rugs, luxurious sofa pillows,  
And everything that isn't old, from Gillows.

The feeling is one of Edwardian Adam-revival, rather than early 19th-century Adam-survival.

In 1926 Cluny had a miraculous escape. On 25 September a fire broke out near the kitchen, either in an unswept flue, or in faulty electric wiring and before it could be brought under control had engulfed the courtyard wings and chapel, the main house only being saved by the efforts of the Aberdeen Fire Brigade. It was ironic that the year before £492 had been spent on a new Hatfield Fire Engine and six pumps, and that Mr Bell, the Firemaster of Aberdeen, had been paid four guineas for instructing the estate staff and advising on fire protection. The local newspapers put the damage at between £60,000 and £70,000. The restoration was put in hand at once and payments amounting to £34,800 were made in the years 1927–9, with a further sum of £1,900 to Clayton and Bell for work to the chapel. This was restored to much of its former appearance from the original drawings under the direction of the architect George Bennet Mitchell of Aberdeen.

As a result of the fire there was yet further replanning of the courtyard wings which makes any attempt to interpret their original function increasingly difficult.

The more recent architectural history of Cluny has been that of so many large country houses since 1945 – the battle of keeping it structurally sound, reasonably weatherproof, and almost manageable. So far the battle has not been lost and in the campaign Cluny has suffered no grievous injuries.

It should be clear from the foregoing that the writer's views on Cluny have undergone a sea-change since 1978. The architectural qualities of the castle as John Smith redesigned it become much more apparent and impressive as one becomes better acquainted with them, and – once regret at the loss of the old Cluny is set aside – it is possible to accord the new Cluny the approbation that it merits.

## THE POLICIES

The earliest reference to the policies of Cluny is to be found in the precept of 1636 which speaks of 'the manor place of Cluny with the house, buildings, gardens, orchards and pertinents thereof'. Because of its situation on a knoll in the midst of a bog, and accessible by a causeway, the grounds immediately about the house can never have been very extensive, and it is unlikely that it was approached by great sycamore avenues and through wrought iron screens as seems to have been the case at nearby Castle Fraser. Indeed the decline in the fortunes of the family over the next 100 years was probably reflected in a similar decay in the surroundings of the castle.

Three years after his father's death in 1769, Cosmo Gordon commissioned a survey of his estate from Peter May. Peter May was not only the leading surveyor of the NE but also factor for Cosmo Gordon's estate at Buckie, an appointment his nephew George Brown was to inherit, so it was not unreasonable to find him involved at Cluny. Writing to his nephew from Elgin, 9 February 1772, he says 'I need not put you in mind of the survey and mensuration of the

estate of Cluny: you know I spoke of it to be done in March or April next at the farthest, and I must insist upon it being peremptorily kept to. I believe no clean plan will be required which will make the survey much shorter'. [NLS MS 3258, f11]. Unfortunately his nephew was dilatory and had allowed himself to be detained elsewhere, for writing on 3 May 1772 May complained 'I have engaged to be at Cluny on my way to Aberdeen by the 11th. I am very much vexed that I cannot have the benefit of the survey, especially as Mr Gordon is on his way to the country and depends on having everything made out'. [NLS MS 3258 f12].

The term 'surveyor' gives a slightly misleading idea of Peter May's work: both from the foregoing letter and from the work of other surveyors working in the NE at this time it is clear that the duties involved devising and laying out schemes for estate improvements as well as making surveys of what was already there. It was certainly in the role of an improver that May was employed at Cluny. The situation of the house, and the likely condition of the estate would have warranted this. Probably the bones of the present layout are the work of May. The first need would have been to drain the land around the castle and to improve its approaches which up to that time seem to have been along a high causeway to the east – much of which still remains – and which itself must have been a serious impediment to proper drainage. Without this work having been carried out first it would have been impossible to have embarked on any enlargement of the house, and it is likely to have been completed out by 1786, the year of Cosmo Gordon's marriage to Mary Baillie. According to Skene Keith her '*exquisite taste*' had given to Cluny '*one of the best gardens in the country*'. She died in 1791 and would have known the great stone walled garden which was probably part of May's improvements. After her death it is unlikely that much was done to the gardens, as distinct from the woodlands and estate buildings, for she was the last laird's wife to live at Cluny until John Gordon's marriage to Emily Pringle in 1865.

From 1867 a considerable amount of time, energy and money was spent on establishing an *Arboretum* of upwards of 360 varieties of trees and shrubs. A full and interesting account of this is to be found in the *Transactions of the Scottish Arboricultural Society*, Vol VII, 1873 which records the various species together with details of their height, girth, and branch spread, and their reaction to the Aberdeen climate. It is to this effort that Cluny owes its present setting.

## CLUNY KIRK

The present kirk at Cluny was rebuilt in 1789 (according to George Hay) or 1804 (according to James Macaulay), replacing the older one described in the *View of the Diocese of Aberdeen* as being '*a cross church having one isle for the Gordons of Cluny, and another for the Frasers of Muchil*'. It was to the new kirk that Cosmo Gordon gave two communion cups in 1791 '*in consequence of a wish expressed by his amiable and accomplished spouse, Mary Baillie, who was unexpectedly carried off by a putrid fever after a few days' illness on the 27th day of May, 1791, in the 23rd year of her age*'.

In the Gordon of Cluny papers [GD 244/36/1/4] is a drawing, *An Elevation, ground and Gallery floor, of the Kirk of Cluny, 1804* showing the Kirk as it was then. I incline to the view that this is a survey of an existing building; had it been a drawing of an intended one it would have been *for the Kirk* rather than *of the Kirk*. The building was considerably altered in the 19th century when one doorway was blocked, windows were altered, galleries removed, and the interior replanned to provide a sub-episcopal setting for worship.

In its original form it provided a perfect example of a small late 18th-century country kirk. It was a simple rectangle measuring 56 ft by 28 ft internally with its long axis running almost E–W. The pulpit and precentor's desk (fig 6: A) stood centrally in the S wall flanked by two large



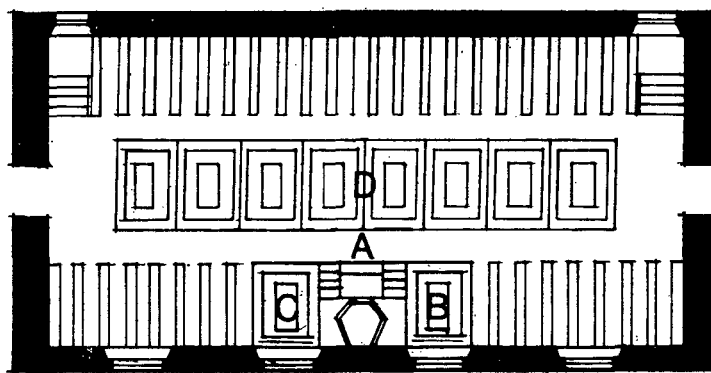
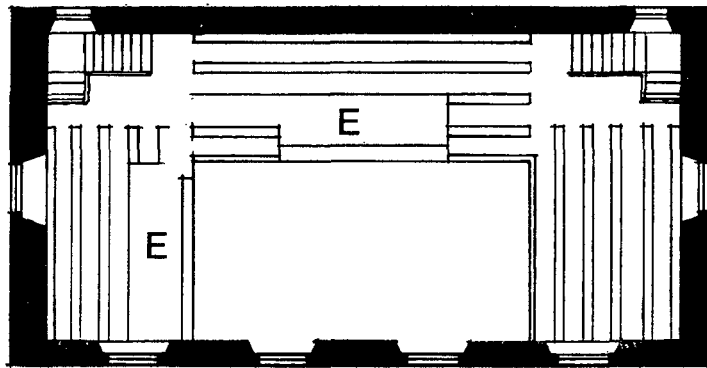
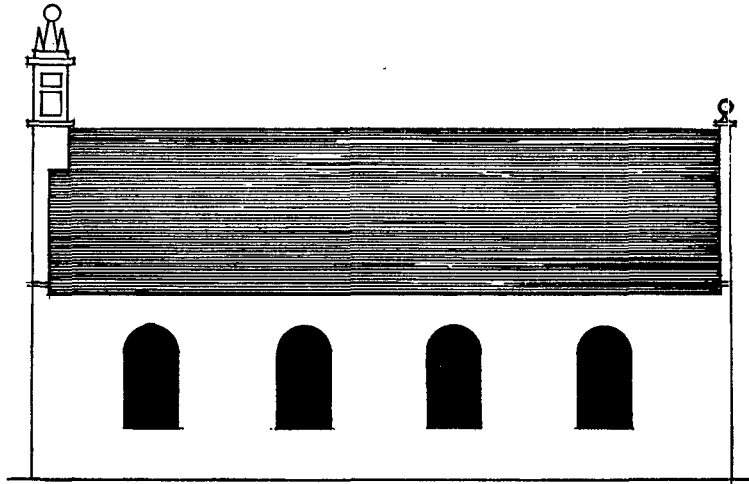


FIG 6 Cluny Kirk 1804. From a drawing in the Scottish Record Office (GD.244/36/1/4)

pews, shown on the drawing as communion pews, but presumably normally in use as pews for the manse and for the elders (B and C). Pews for the congregation faced towards the pulpit at right angles to the walls, and the centre of the Kirk was filled by eight communion pews (D). Galleries reached by stairs in the NE and NW corners ran round three sides of the kirk. Two large pews (E) or *lofts* are shown in the galleries, one facing the pulpit, the other occupying the width of the S gallery: neither are shown as having benches so presumably they pertain to Cluny and to Castle Fraser, replacing the *isles* of the cross Kirk. The absence of benches suggest that a more comfortable form of seating was provided for the latter ends of the better born. A note on the drawing records that *The bottom of the Galleries is 8 feet from the floor of the Kirk in front, and the Galleries rises 3 ft 9 backwards – the Ceiling is coved at 4 feet above the level of the walls.*

Externally the kirk was equally plain with charrly pointed roughly coursed rubble walls, four round-headed windows in the S wall, a door and window in each gable and two windows in the N wall to light the gallery stairs. The only attempts at adornment were a round finial on the E gable and a small bellcot surmounted by a round finial and four truncated obelisks on the W gable. This latter contains a bell, 18 ins diameter, cast at the Aberdeen foundry of John Mowat. It is dated and inscribed IOA . MOWAT . ME . FECIT . VET . ABD . 1746 . IN . USUM . ECCLESIAE . DE . CLUNNY . SABATA . PANGO . FUNERA . PLANGO.

In the adjoining burial ground, and quite putting the kirk out of countenance, is the magnificent mausoleum designed by James Byers for Miss Elyza Fraser of Castle Fraser.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to record my thanks to the Trustees of *Sir John Soane's Museum* for permission to reproduce the Adam drawings of Cluny from their collection, and to the *Yale Centre of British Art* for permission to reproduce the unidentified plan of Cluny in the *Mellon Collection*. For permission to make extensive use of material from the manuscript of James Skene I am indebted to the *Edinburgh City Libraries* in whose possession it is. Sir James Clerk of *Penicuik* has most kindly allowed me to transcribe and publish Adam's Specification and Estimate for work at Cluny contained in the *Clerk of Penicuik* papers; and thanks to Messrs Skene, Edwards and Garson WS I have been able to make use of their collection of Gordon of Cluny papers. As always the staff of the Scottish Record Office, and of Kings College Library, Aberdeen have been helpful, informative and understanding. Above all my warmest thanks to Mr and Mrs Robin Linzee Gordon of Cluny who placed their time, their papers, and their home at my disposal.

#### APPENDIX A

*From the unpublished MS of James Skene of Rubislaw in the Public Library, Edinburgh.*

'Cluny Castle' for a small simple building in which the leading principle of the Scotch castellated mansion of the 15th century is strictly adhered to, affords a striking example of the picturesque arrangement and grouping of its different features which that style of building admits of, and which the architects of the day seem to have had singular skill in adapting so that in almost every point of view the lines of most of these buildings produce a pleasing effect. And possessing this merit the architects of that early period must be allowed to have been in no small degree skilful in taste, as is one of the most important requisites of the art. The body of the building is as usual a great square tower of solid masonry, having a large round tower at the two diagonal angles opposite to each other, and suspended turrets on the two remaining angles of the square tower united by subordinate architectural features so skilfully disposed as to produce the pleasing effect alluded to, as at every step in making the circuit of the building, the constantly varying composition of its prominent parts fall into a succession of graceful attitudes, such as a painter would delight to represent. Whether it may in this case be the effect of a fortunate accident, or that

the architect of Cluny Castle possessed the same talent of harmonising the lines of his work into so masterly an arrangement, it is difficult to say, but we must allow that there are few productions of the present day which could be subjected to the ordeal of taking its aspect in any possible part without detecting something tame or awkward in the composition when thus taken at a disadvantage. And (used) as a defensible position, Cluny having hitherto the advantage of its original scheme being but little tampered with, it is so guarded by projecting towers and suspended turrets, that an enemy could not set foot on any part of the surrounding ground without being exposed to the direct fire from loopholes in some quarter, and generally from more quarters than one, besides the advantage of standing isolated on a rising ground which is surrounded by low marshy meadows. Since writing the above I have learned that a large mushroom tenement like a cotton manufactory has been raised up by the proprietor in front of this beautiful and antique gem by which the singular merits of so pure a specimen of architect's art are now smothered up in modern masonry.

One of the most striking features is the great circular tower which preserves this form from the base to the third floor only, whence it become polygonal, and ultimately rises to a bevelled pediment surmount by a chimney. Near the top of this tower on the obtuse angle from which it is bevelled is attached a sort of small ornamented tribune of solid masonry all round which externally appears to be merely a piece of architectural decoration corresponding to the grotesque character of the whole building, but internally serves a singular purpose and to which intent it was probably contrived. The angular form of the front of the tower occasions an additional thickness of wall at that part as the apartments within are circular, the flues from the fireplace are constructed in this angle and means are contrived by which a person may without difficulty ascend one of the chimneys, where at the height of a few feet within the vent a door presents itself, opening into a concealed apartment within the tribune mentioned above. The door is so adjusted as to prevent the intrusion of smoke from the chimney into which it opens, and the ornamented cornice of the tribune externally gives an opportunity of the admission of light and air without any opening being discernible from without. And with a good fire blazing in the chimney below it certainly [would] never occur to any successful assailant of the castle to search for his enemy in the chimney, where, nevertheless, with a competent provision of food he might manage to continue long enough sheltered. This was not probably the only concealment in the castle, but the renewed arrangements that had taken place in the interior prevented the detection of them now, although within the body of the wall there is a concealed staircase to the dungeon below, but so very narrow as to require to penetrate through it edgewise.

On the opposite tower of the building there is a square guardhouse raised in a singularly bold style, and surmounted by a small circular watch tower attached to it, as if by the force of strong cement and in a manner which tempts one to conceive that by constructing it thus the architect was willing only to exhibit the extent of bizarre contrivance of which his art was capable. There is throughout the whole a system of seemingly sportive angling and counter angling which, at the same time that it is highly favourable to the purposes of picturesque effect, takes the most ingenious advantage of the strong points for support while, to the eye, the works appears suspended by magnetical if not by magical influence. Although to convey any distinct notion of these intricacies they must be seen and minutely examined the adjoining sketch may suffice to give some idea of this flying watch tower.

The square suspended turrets are also of an unusual shape and remarkably picturesque. The large circular towers seem to be about 60 ft in height, but the whole building is built on a small scale as the Hall is only 25 ft by 18 ft, and throughout the interior is an intricate maze of small apartments, passages and holes in the wall. I did not anywhere detect the existence of a lug, but the means of its contrivance seemed so abundant that there is little doubt that something of the kind did formerly exist. There is now no date on the building as all the coats of arms had been removed, but apparently it belonged to the close of the 15th century. It belonged to one of the branches of Clan Gordon, although not the family of that name at present in possession.

## APPENDIX B

Edinburgh 1 Sept 1790

*Particular description of Building and finishing an addition to Clunie Castle Aberdeenshire one of the seats of Cosmo Gordon Esq one of the Barons of the Exchequer.*

To dig the foundations one foot below the first floor both in the body of the house and offices with proper drains the foundations in the body of the house to be laid three feet six inches thick, those in the

offices three feet thick, the wall of the house in the first or ground storey to be three feet thick and to diminish in proportion at each floor until they come to two feet thick at the top. All the walls to be built of good substantial rubble work: the Rybats Sills, lintles and corners to be of granite, rough ridged so as to receive the rough castings with lime into the sash frames of the windows and frames of the outside doors, the string round the house and corble cornice to be of granite neatly dressed with the hammer, the parapet walls to be laid in courses and ridged, the caps of the chimney heads to be ridged also.

The stairs and flats to be of polished stone from the Hails Quarry and moulded in the front and ends of steps and flats. The jambs and hearths of all the rooms in the addition to the house to be of polished Hails stone except the drawing-room and Mrs Gordon's rooms in the North East Tower which Baron Gordon is to finish at his own expense. The pavement of the Hall and staircase to be polished stone from the Hails Quarry, the pavement in the passage from the staircase to the kitchen and from the staircase through the Court into the Steward's room and from the Hall to ditto to be of droved pavement from the Hails Quarry also; all the vents in the house to be well plastered and to be built as near as possible to the section made out for that purpose.

The walls of the kitchen offices in the first or cellar floor to be two feet six inches thick about the foundations and to diminish proportionally to two feet thick at the top. All the walls to be of good rubble work, the Rybats Sills, lintles and corners to be of granite rough ridged so as to receive the rough casting into the sash frames of the windows and frames of the outside doors. The base, string and corble cornice to be of granite neatly dressed with the hammer, the blocking course, chimney caps, and cornice of chimneys to be of granite neatly ridged, the kitchen, scullery, and bakehouse jambs to be of granite neatly ridged: the sills of the ovens and arches over them to be of brick, the floors of the kitchen and scullery to be of droved pavement from the Hails Quarry, the pavement in the covered passages from the kitchen to the new part of the house, and the pavement from the kitchen through the bread room to the servants' hall to be droved of Hails stone or granite if it can be got, whichever Baron Gordon shall think most proper. The centre of the kitchen court to be causewayed with gutters for carrying off the water to communicate with the great drain from the scullery and water closet. The South Tower to be taken down two storeys and rebuilt to the height of the North East Tower with corble cornice and parapets as described by the Plans and Elevations, the sills, lintles, and Rybats to be of granite rough ridged, the corble cornice to be of granite neatly wrought, the parapet to be laid in courses and ridged the same stair that is in the South Tower is to be continued. The jambs and hearths to be of Hails Stone except the jambs and hearths in the present rooms are found to answer, the thickness of the walls at the top of the old work to be two feet three inches thick and to diminish to two feet thick.

#### Carpenter and joiner

The principal rafters in the body of the House to be nine inches by three inches at bottom and seven by three at top and one foot three inches from centre to centre of each rafter, the sarking to be three-quarters of an inch thick, all of the floors to be bound or framed joisting (except the ground storey) the girders twelve inches by eleven inches binding joists eight by six inches bridging joists four by three inches and twelve inches apart, to be sound boarded and deafened with plaster and laid with battons not exceeding six inches broad. Ceiling joists three inches by two inches. The servants' room in the North East Tower, butler's room and pantry, steward's room or old servants' hall and the servants' hall or old kitchen to have deal floors of battons not exceeding six inches broad with sleepers six inches by three inches and twelve inches apart.

All the windows in the body of the House to have deal sashes two and a quarter inches thick and glazed with the best Crown glass from the Leith Glassworks and to be hung with cast iron weights and brass pulleys, the windows in the offices to have deal sashes two inches thick and glazed with 2nd Crown glass from ditto Glassworks, the principal entry door to be bead and flush on the outside and raised panels in the inside. Outside doors from small court in centre of the House to be six panelled bead and flush on the outside and square within, the outside door from the body of the House to the kitchen court to be bead and flush on the outside and straight within. The kitchen, scullery, larder and staircase doors to be bead and flush to the court and straight within, the doors to the Butler's room, pantry, hall, Steward's room and servants' room in North East Tower to be six panelled, the beer cellar to have a plain deal door. All the doors in the drawing-room storey to be six panelled seven feet by three feet six and two inches thick. All the doors in the bedroom floor to be six panelled and six feet eight inches by three feet four

inches and one and three quarters inches thick. The doors in the attic floor to be six feet three inches by three feet and one and three quarter inches thick, the press or closet doors to be one and a half inches thick. The kitchen, scullery, bakehouse and cook's pantry to be four panelled and one and a half inches thick, the doors to the coal, wood, and peat cellars to be framed of deal to a drawing made out for that purpose, the bread presses to have doors one and a quarter inches thick and fitted up with four shelves each of one inch deal, the cook's pantry to have three shelves round of one inch deal. The kitchen, scullery, bakehouse, cook's pantry and larder to be finished with plain skirting boards. The Madeira cellar to be fitted up with nine catacombes divided with brick, the larder to have no other finishing than the door and two windows, plain skirting and facings and rubbed in with two-coat plaster, the inner partitions and wire tirlesses to be done by Baron Gordon, the servants' hall, steward's room, butler's room and pantry and servants' room in the North East Tower all to be furnished with plain facings round windows and doors and plain skirting boards, the shutters in the ground storey and all the other windows in the body of the house to be one and a half inches thick and divided into such a number of panels as the heights of the windows will allow; the partitions in the butler's room and servants' room to be of brick, the columns and pilasters between the hall and staircase to be of wood and done to a design made out for that purpose, the drawing-room to be finished with plain dado with base and surbase moulding and double faced architraves, Mrs Gordon's room to be finished in the same manner as the drawing-room. The anteroom to be finished with architraves six inch skirting and Torus moulding, but without any surbase moulding. The bedroom storey to be finished with window linings. Architraves, six inch skirting with Torus moulding but without dada or surbases; all the attic rooms to be finished with plain facings and plain skirtings.

All the chimneys in the bedrooms to have no chimney pieces but plain wood Ovalos round the stone fascias. The two rooms in the South Tower to have new windows, new doors and new batten floors and finished with plain facing and skirting boards, the scantling to be the same with those in the North East Tower, all the outside walls of the House and the South Tower to be battened and lathed.

#### Slater

To cover the House and Towers with the best Isdale slates that can be got from Aberdeen, and the offices slated with the same.

#### Plumber

To cover all the gutters with proper dreeps with the best lead at 7 lb per foot, the peans and ridge rolls at 6 lb per foot the rainwater pipes three inches diameter the water closet to be completely fitted up with seat, waste pipe, and soil pipe to communicate with the drain from the kitchen and scullery.

#### Plasterer

To finish the hall, principal stairs and anteroom with hard finishing well trowelled and sanded, the drawing-room and Mrs Gordon's room smooth finished with three coat plaster for paper; the bedrooms and dressing rooms the same, all the ceilings to be floted on lath and set with stucco and an enriched cornice, frieze and astragale in the drawing-room. Mrs Gordon's room staircase and hall to have enriched cornices all the bedrooms and dressing rooms to have plain cornices, the butler's room pantry and servants' rooms to have common plaster on ceilings and walls, the kitchen, scullery, bakehouse, cook's pantry and larder two coats of common plaster on walls and ceilings, the servants' hall and steward's room to be repaired round above the skirting and facing if necessary the old plaster is thought good and repair is only included in this estimate.

#### Smith

To make three mortice locks and mounting two for the drawing-room and one for Mrs Gordon's room. One ten inch brass lock for the entry door and brass locks for the bedrooms, and brass locks for the dressing rooms, servants' rooms, kitchen, scullery, bakehouse and larder, the cellars to have stock locks with fasteners for window shutters and bolts for doors, and plain ballusters for rail for stairs and gratings for drains.

To excavate all the branches of work specified in the foregoing description and agreeable to Plans, Elevations and Sections made and signed by both parties will if done in a substantial and workmanlike manner amount to the sum of three thousand three hundred and thirty eight pounds eleven shillings and two pence sterling including carriages of every kind, but in case Baron Gordon will take upon himself to perform all ordinary and extraordinary carriages and freights of material of every kind the sum of six hundred and fourteen pounds two shillings and 5½d sterling will be allowed to him for that purpose, and Mr Adam will contract to perform the whole of the work above described exclusive of said carriages and freights for the sum of two thousand seven hundred and twenty four pounds eight shillings and eight ½ pence sterling.

## ESTIMATE OF AN ADDITION TO CLUNY CASTLE AND KITCHEN OFFICES

Rds	yds	ft				
83	23	7	of Ruble work reduced to 2 ft @ £8 ft	£669	5	4
Feet	Ins	"				
1182	2	"	of Corbille Cornice " 5/-	296	10	10
1969	10	"	of Nidged Rybats " 1/6	147	14	9
572	"	"	of do corners " 1/6	38	8	"
1694	"	"	of polished Pavement) of Carriage do ) " 1/-	127	1	"
225	"	"	of do Hearths do " 6d " 1/-	16	17	6
586	6	"	of do Jambs " 9d " 1/3	58	3	"
1973	"	"	of do Hanging Stairs " 9d " 1/3	197	6	"
141	3	"	of Nidged String round the House " 1/6	10	11	10½
157	6	"	of Columns and Pilasters and lintles over do supporting the covered passages from the offices to the body of the House 5/-	39	7	6
163	"	"	of Granite Stairs that leads to the Coal Cellar " 2/-	16	10	"
164			of Brick Arches over ovens " 3/-	24	12	"
				<hr/>		
				£1,642	17	9½
Yds	Feet	Ins	Carpenter and Joiners			
1053	3	6	of Roofing Carr " 6d " 6/-	342	13	6
658	4	8	of Flooring and joisting Carriage 6d . . . 6/6	230	9	6
640			of Lath on Ceilings Carriage 1d . . . 10d	29	6	8
				<hr/>		
				£602	9	8

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Yds	Feet	Ins	Brought over	£602	9	8	£1642	17	9½
250	"	"	of Sound Boarding carriage 2d . . . . .						
	290		@ 1/2 of lineal Ridge Roll carriage 1d . . .	16	13	4			
812	6	4	" 4d of lath on walls including battening carriage 2d . . . . .	6	"	10			
	493	7	" 1/3 of Lineal door frames carriage 1d . . .	57	11	3			
	1059	9	" 4d of deal Sashes Glazed and hung carriage 3d . . .	10	5	8			
40	5	"	" 2/3 of 1 inch deal work carriage 2d . . . . .	132	9	4½			
509	"	"	" 2/6 of Boundwork in door Shutters and linings carriage 2d . . . . .	5	8	3			
			" 4/- of 1½ inch deal work carriage 2d . . . . .	106	"	10			
78	3	"	" 3/6 of Lineal Base impost and Architrave Moulding carriage 1d . . . . .	14	7	3			
	1701	"	" 11d of Plain facings and Scifing Boards carriage ½p . . . . .	77	19	3			
	1501	"	" 3d of Columns and pilasters in Hall and Stair case carriage 3d . . . . .	22	"	5			
"	140	"	" 1/3 of Mahogany handrail carriage 2d . . . . .	10	10	5			
	131		" 2/6 of Slating do 10/- £5	17	9	4			
Rds	Yds	Feet							
29	10			161	"	6	1240	5	11½
							£2883	3	9

Yds	Feet	Ins	Brought over	£2883	3	9
			Plaster Work			
661	8	"	of Hard finishing carriage 2d .....			
			10d	33	1	8
751	7	"	of 3 Coat Plaster carriage 2d .....			
			8d	31	6	5
933	6	"	of do in Ceilings carriage 2d .....			
			8d	38	17	11
"	619	"	of plain Cornice lineal measure carriage 1d .....			
			8d	24	4	3
"	120	"	of Frize and Cornice in drawing room carriage 1d .....			
			3/-	12	10	"
	140		of enriched cornice in Mrs Gordon's room carriage 1d .....			
			1/4	4	5	"
				<hr/>		
				160	6	11
			Smith's Work			
15	"	"	of Plain Iron rail of Stair case			
			20/-	15	"	"
			1 10 inch pass lock for entry door with folding handles	1	1	"
			3 Mortice locks and mounting " 21/-	3	3	"
			8 7 inch brass do 15/-	6	"	"
			2 9 inch do " 20/-	2	"	"
			32 Iron rimmed locks ... " 10/-	16	"	"
			39 pair of strong patent edge hinges @ 3/- p pair	5	17	1
				<hr/>		
				£49	1	"
				£3043	10	8



Yds	Feet	Ins	Brought over	£49	1	"	£3045	10	8
			10 pair of strong patent edge hinges . . . .						
			@ 2/6	1	5	"			
			82 pairs do . . . . .						
			" 1/2	6	3	"			
			42 pair do . . . . .						
			" 1/-	2	2	"			
			18 pair Strong Cross taild do . . . . .						
			" 5/-	4	10	"			
			window fasteners	4	10	"			
			Bolts and fastners for cellar doors ac	2	5	"			
			8 stock locks						
			" 8/-	3	4	"			
			1 double pully for hanging lamp in Staircase						
			"		15	"			
			Carriage of all the above Smith Work	5	"	"			
							78	15	"
			<b>Plumber</b>						
			37 cw <sup>s</sup> of sheet lead						
			" 28/-	51	16	"			
			2 cw <sup>s</sup> do in rain-water pipes . . . . .						
			do	2	16	"			
			1 water closet wt seat compleat	25	"	"			
			Carriage of the above plumber work . . . . .	5	5	"			
							84	17	"
			Necessary repairs on the old house and on the roof	"	"	"	50	"	"
							3257	2	8
							81	8	6
			Incidents 2½p cert				£3338	11	2
			Deduct for extra Carr Do for carriages in the ordinary proportion	280	5	5½			
				333	17	-			
							614	2	5½
							£2724	8	8½

## ESTIMATE OF EXTRA CARRIAGE FOR BUILDING A NEW ADDITION TO CLUNIE CASTLE, ABERDEENSHIRE

Yds	Feet	Ins						
"	1694	"	of Polished pavement @ 6d	£42	7	"		
"	225	"	of do Hearths ... " 6d	5	12	6		
	586	6	of do Jambs ..... " 9d	21	19	10½		
	1973	"	of do Hanging stairs ..... " 9d	73	19	9		
							143	19 1½
1054	3	6	of Roofing ..... " 6d	26	7	2		
658	4	8	of Flooring and joisting ..... " 6d	16	19	2		
640	"	"	of Lath on ceilings .. " 1d	2	13	4		
250	"	"	of Sound boarding .... " 2d	2	1	8		
"	290	"	of Lineal Ridge Roll ..... " 1d	1	4	2		
812	6	4	of Lath on Walls on Battening ..... " 2d	6	15	4		
"	493	7	of Lineal door frames ..... " 1d	2	1	1		
	965	9	of Sashes for Windows .. " 3d	12	1	3		
40	5	"	of Inch deal work ... " 2d	"	6	9		
509	"	"	of Boundwork in doors etc ..... " 2d	4	4	10		
78	3	"	of 1½ inch deal work .. " 2d	"	13	"		
"	1701	"	of mouldings ..... " 1d	7	1	9		
"	1501	"	of Plain facings etc .. " ½d	3	2	11		
"	140	"	of Columns and plasters ..... " 3d	1	15	"		
"	131	"	of Handrail ..... " 2d	1	1	10		
Rds	Yds	Ft						
29	10	"	of Slating ..... " 10/-	14	12	9		
							102	12 "
							£246	11 1½

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Yds	Feet	Ins	Brought over	£246	11	1½
661	8	"	of Hard finishing ... @ 2d	5	10	3
751	7	"	of 3 coat Plaister .. " 2d	6	5	3
933	6	"	of do in Ceilings .. " 2d	7	15	7
"	619	"	of Plain cornice lineal measures ... " 1d	2	11	7
"	120	"	of Frize and Cornice .. " 1d	"	10	"
"	140	"	of enriched do .....	"	11	8
"	60	"	of do in Hall .....	"	5	"
				<hr/>		
			Smith work	23	9	4
			Plumber do	5	"	"
				5	5	"
				<hr/>		
			Carriages in the ordinary proportions	£280	5	5½
				£333	17	"
				<hr/>		
				£614	2	5½

## REFERENCES

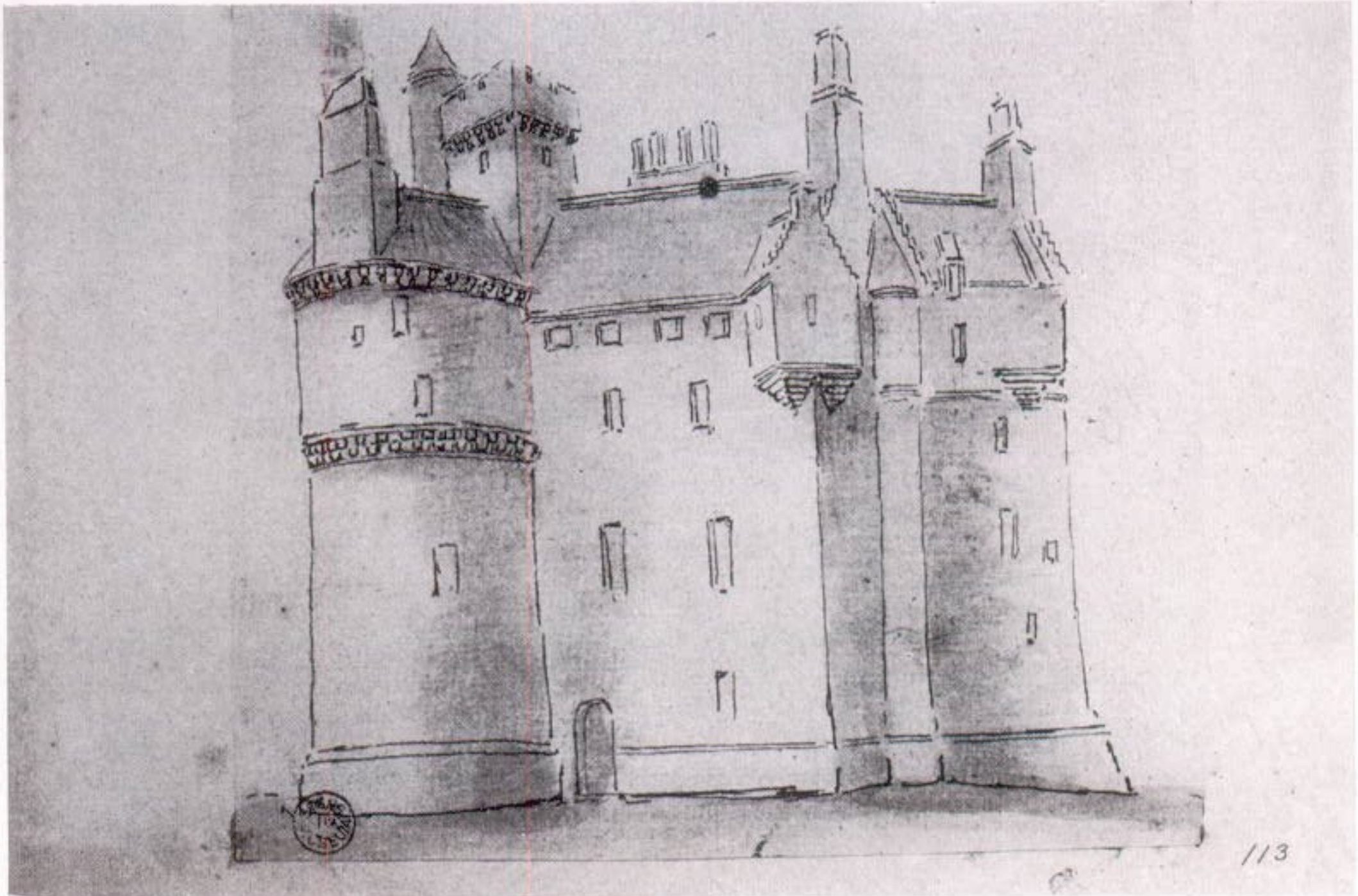
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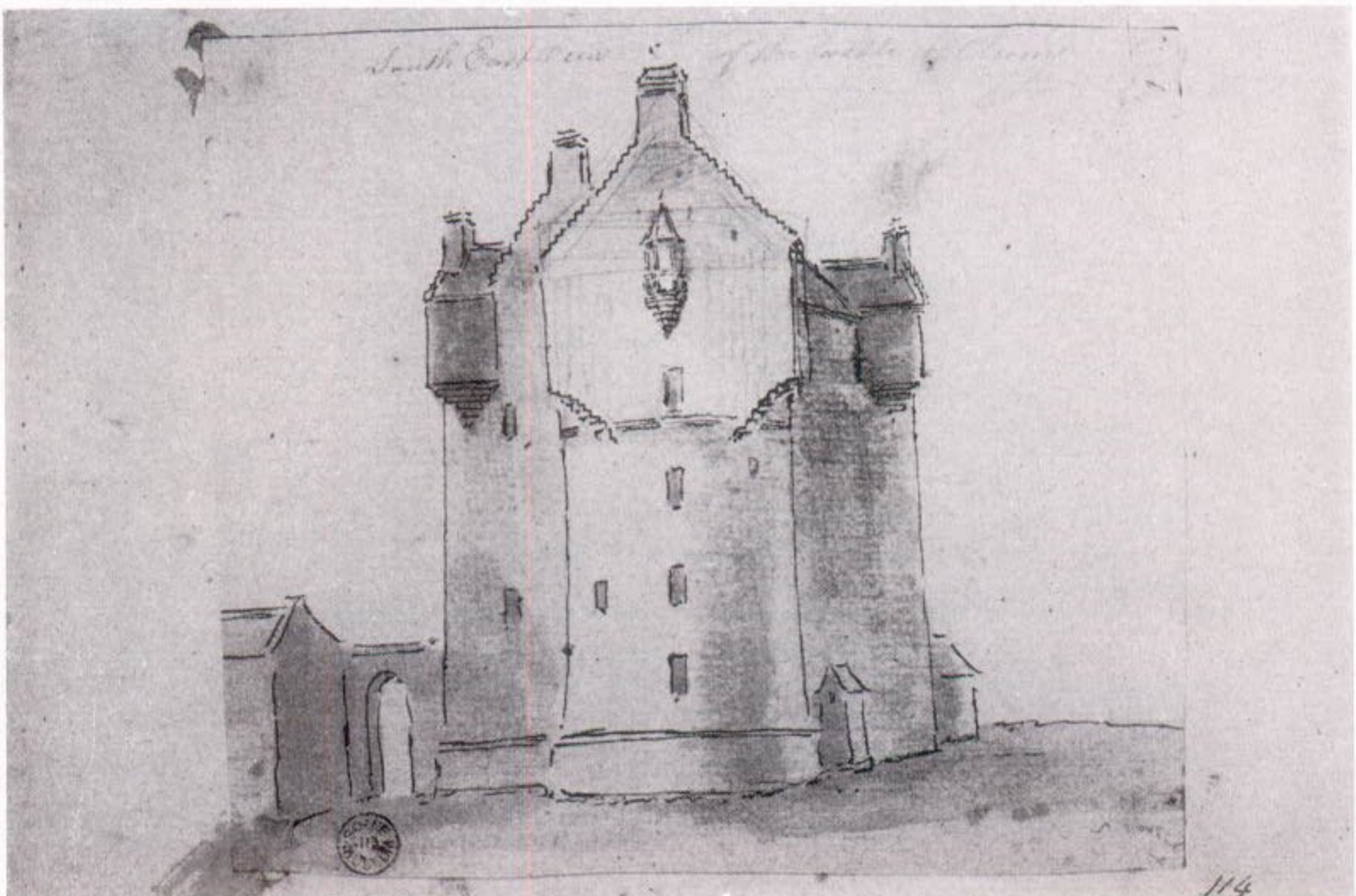
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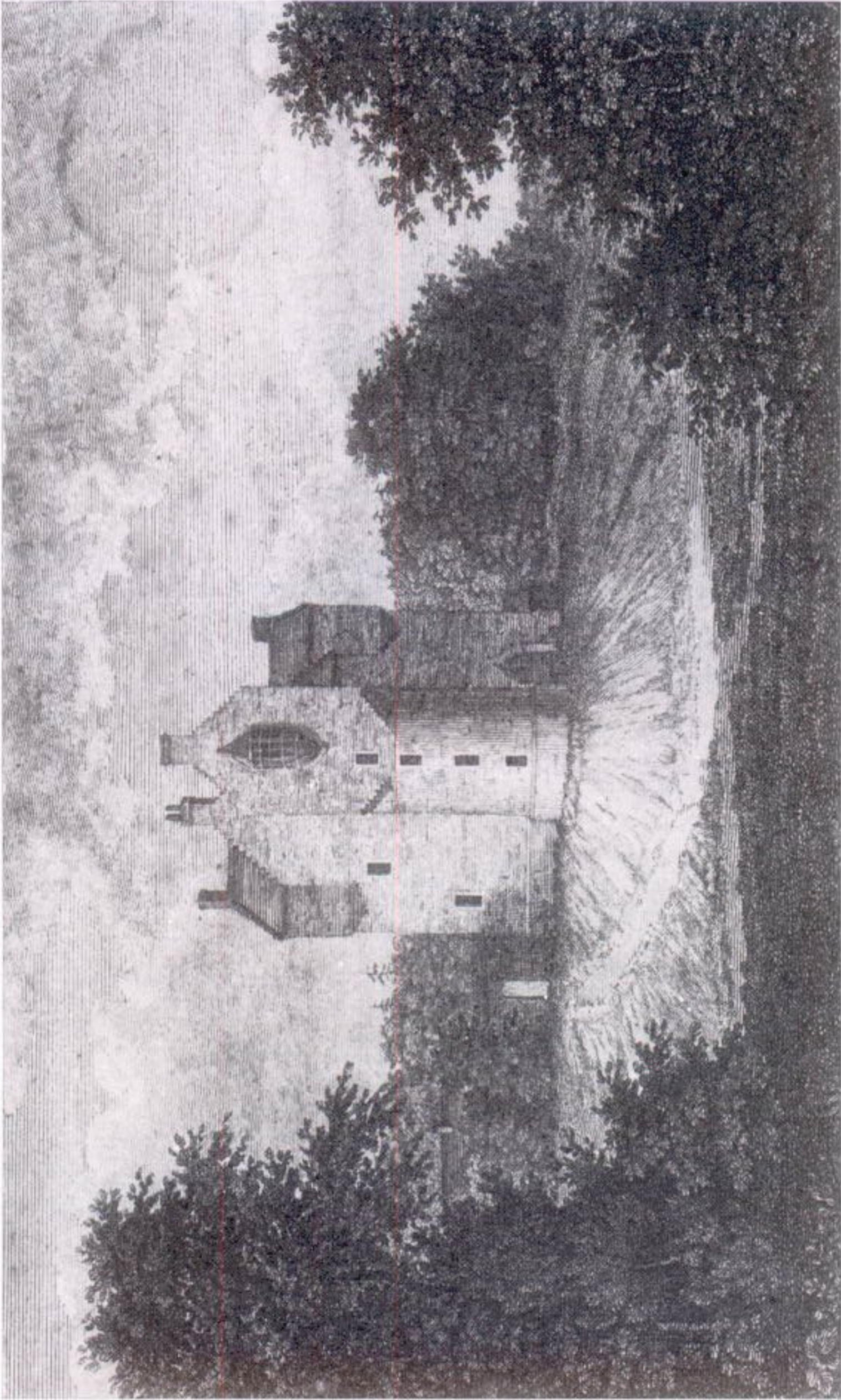


a Cluny Castle: from SW c 1789 (Soane Museum)



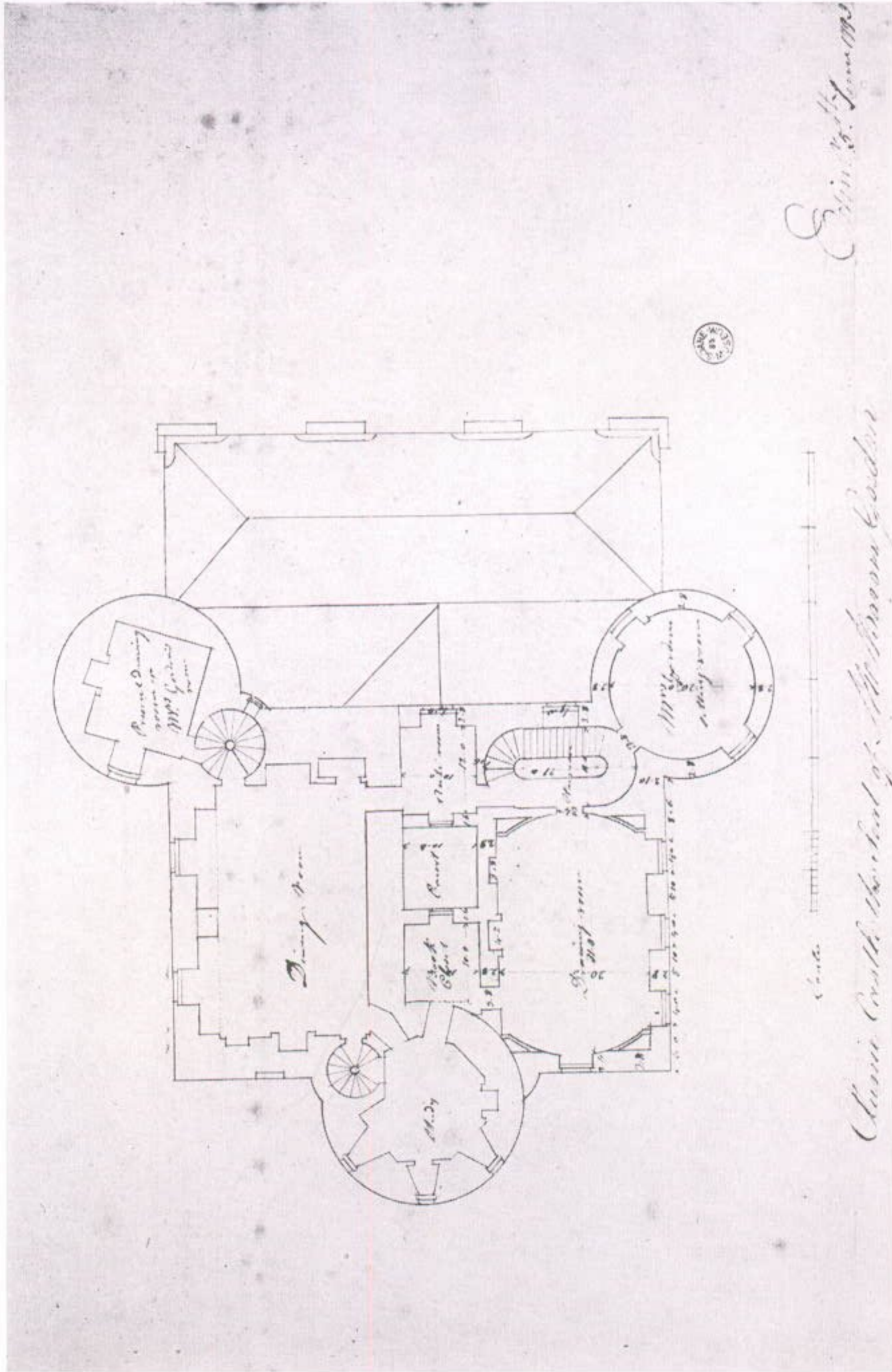
b Cluny Castle: from SE c 1789 (Soane Museum)





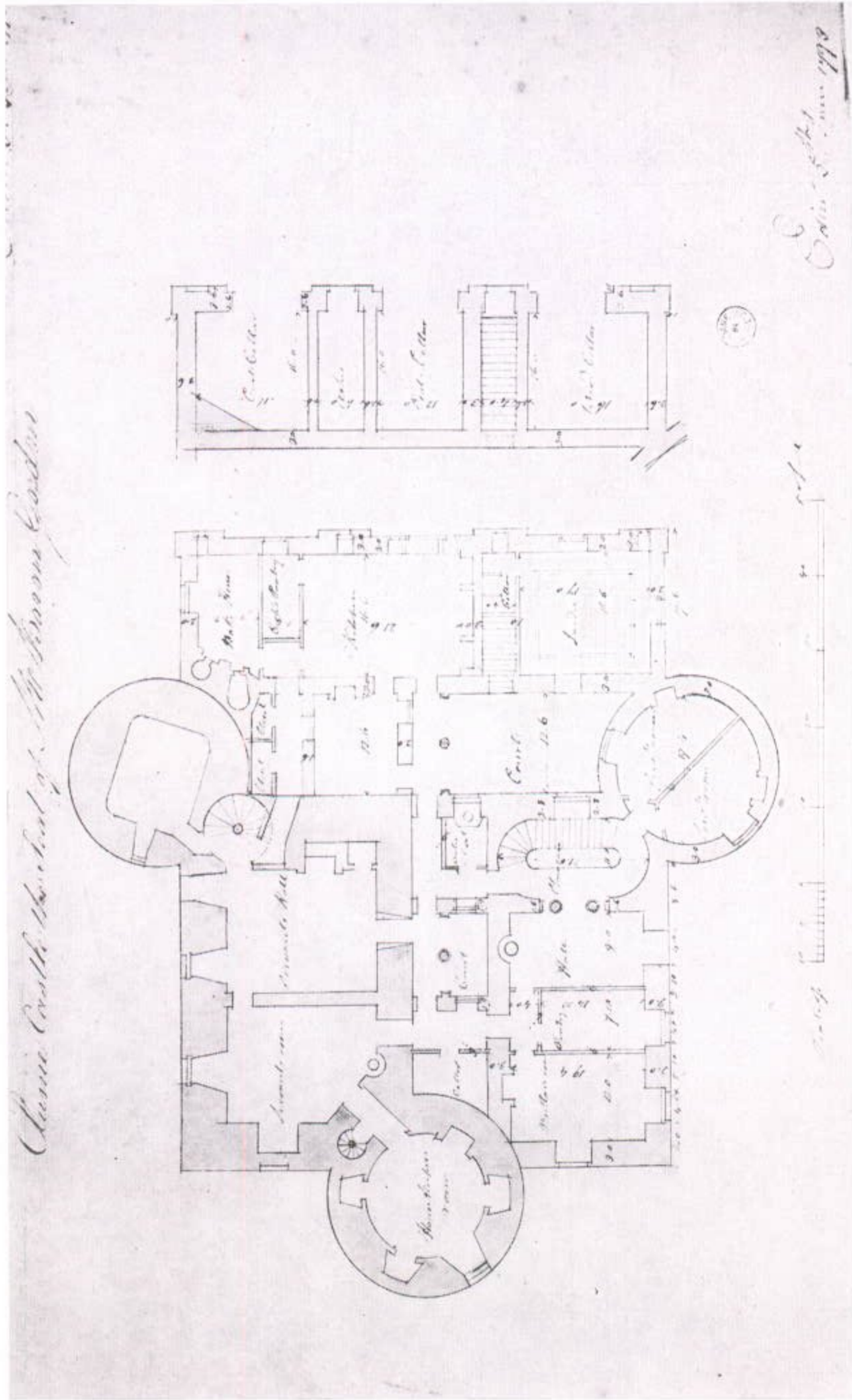
Clunie in Aberdeenshire c 1780 (RCAMS)





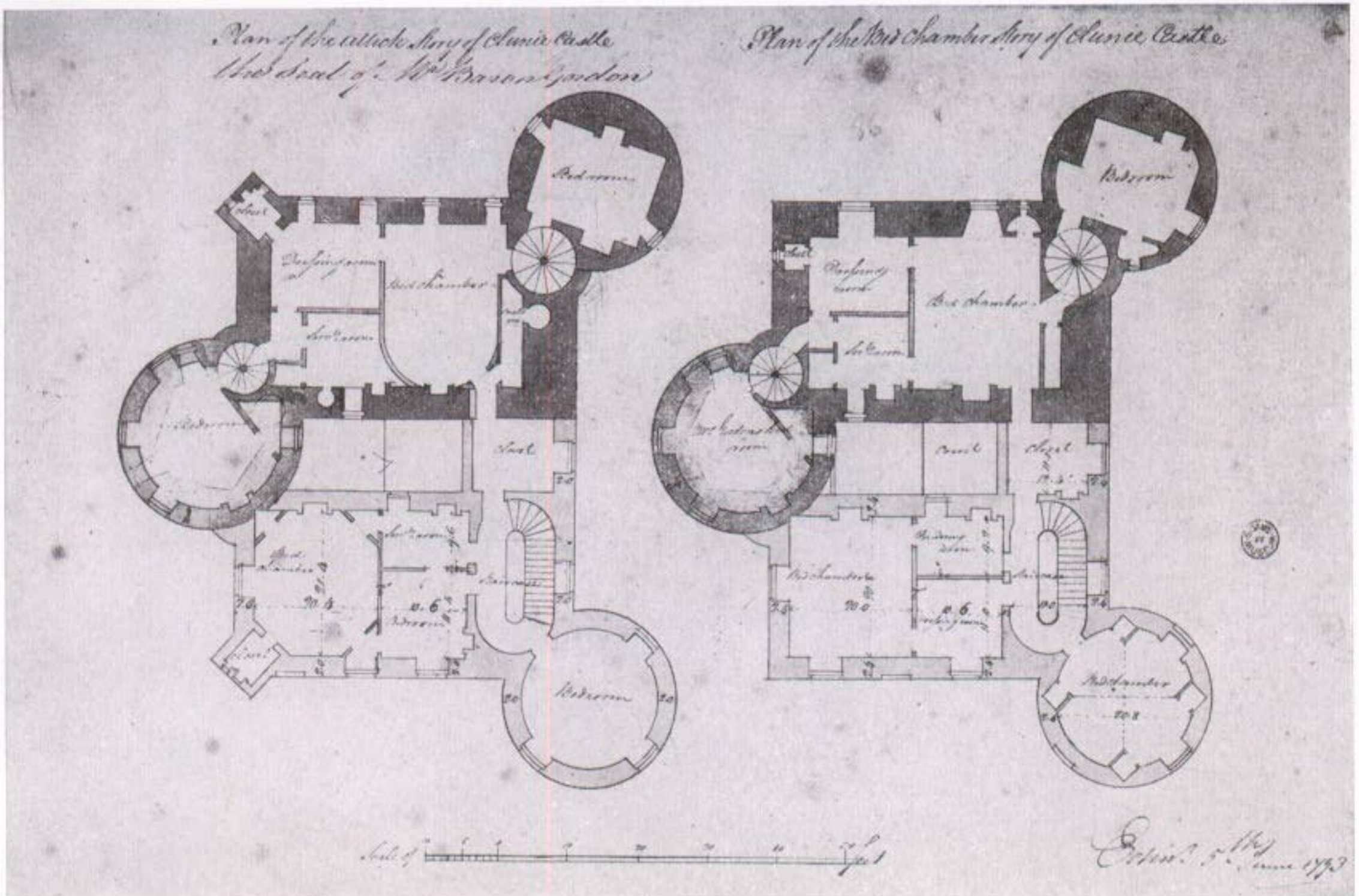
Cluny Castle: First Floor 1793 (Soane Museum)



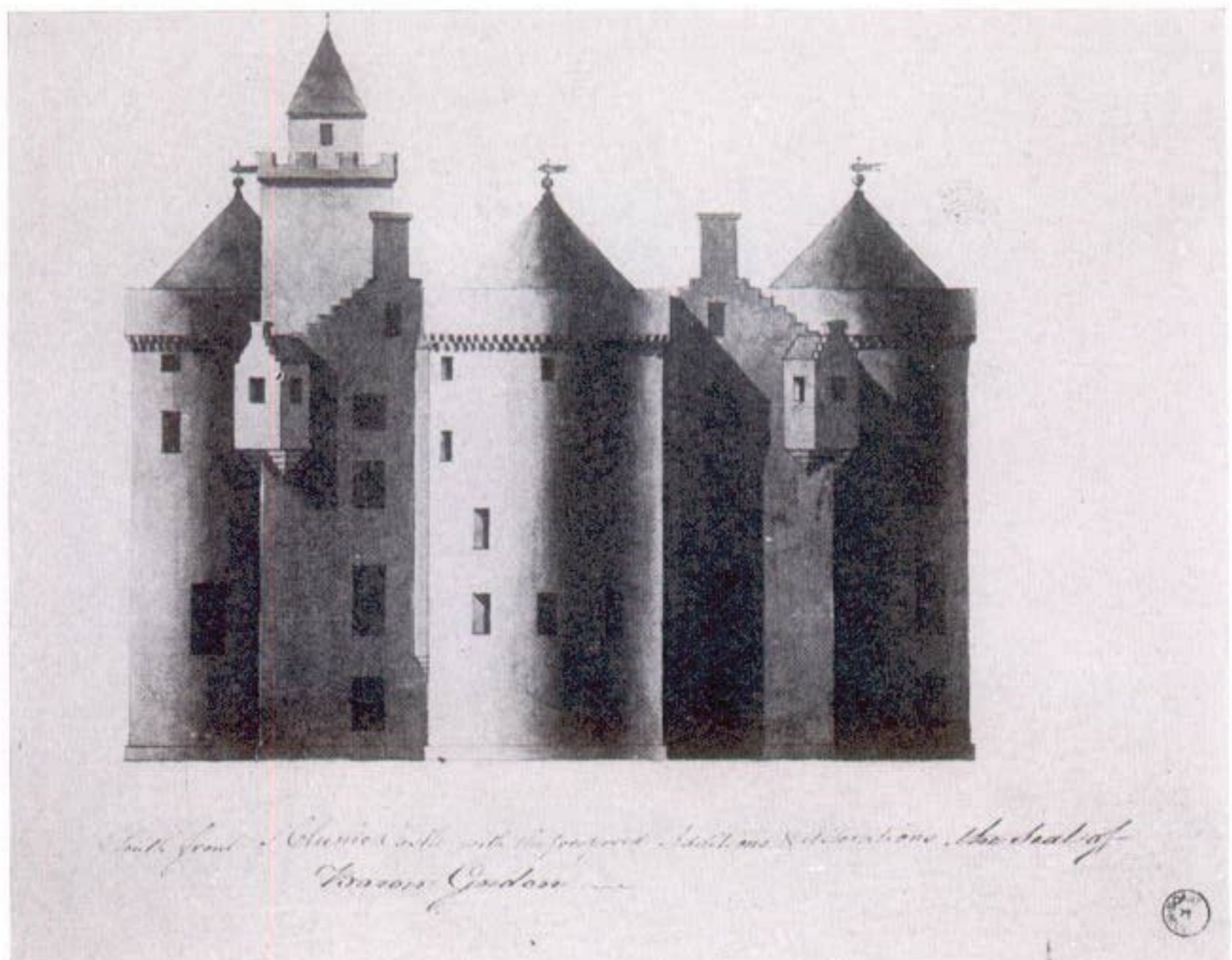


Cluny Castle: Ground Floor 1793 (Soane Museum)



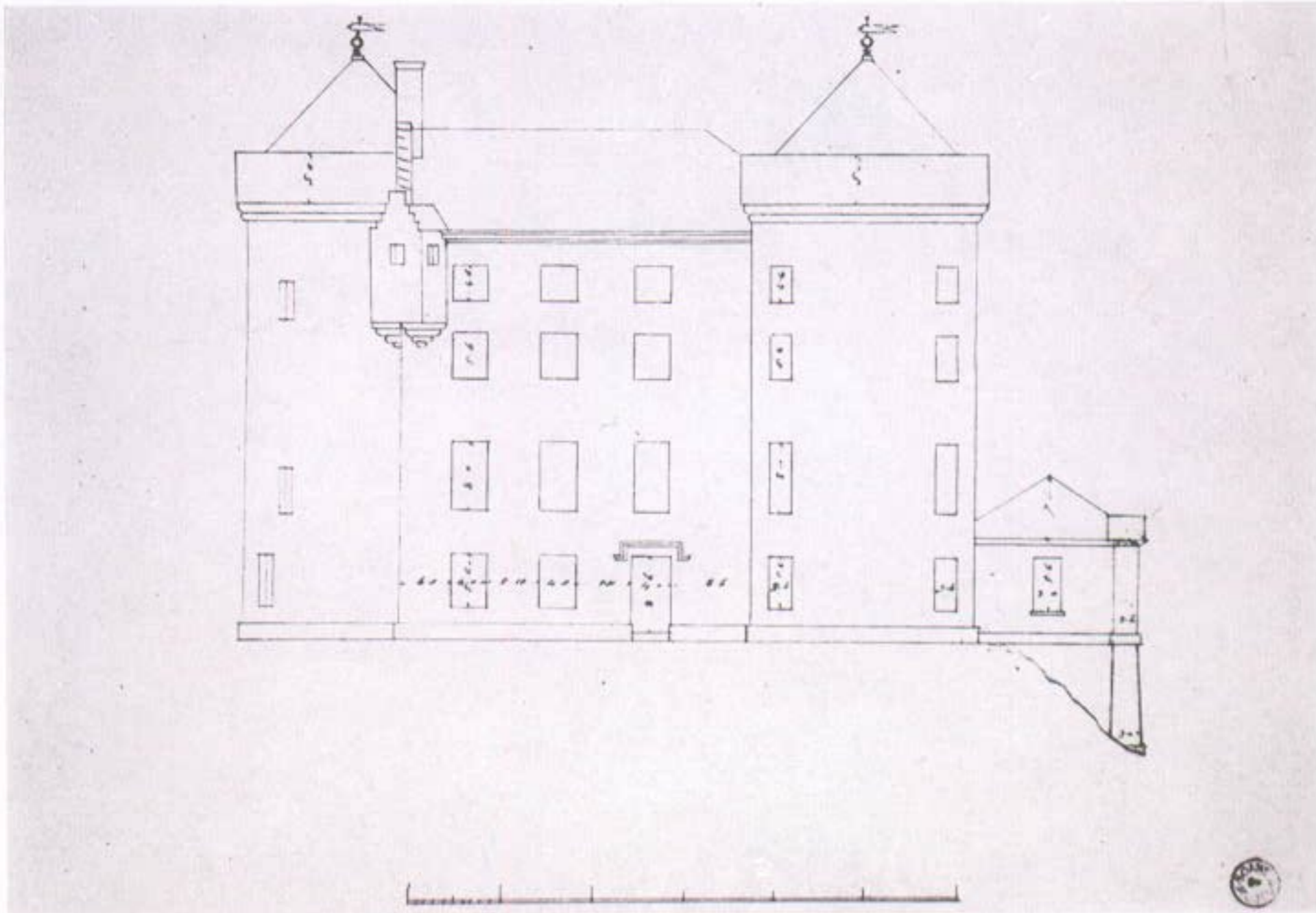


a Cluny Castle: Bedchamber & Attic Floors 1793 (Soane Museum)

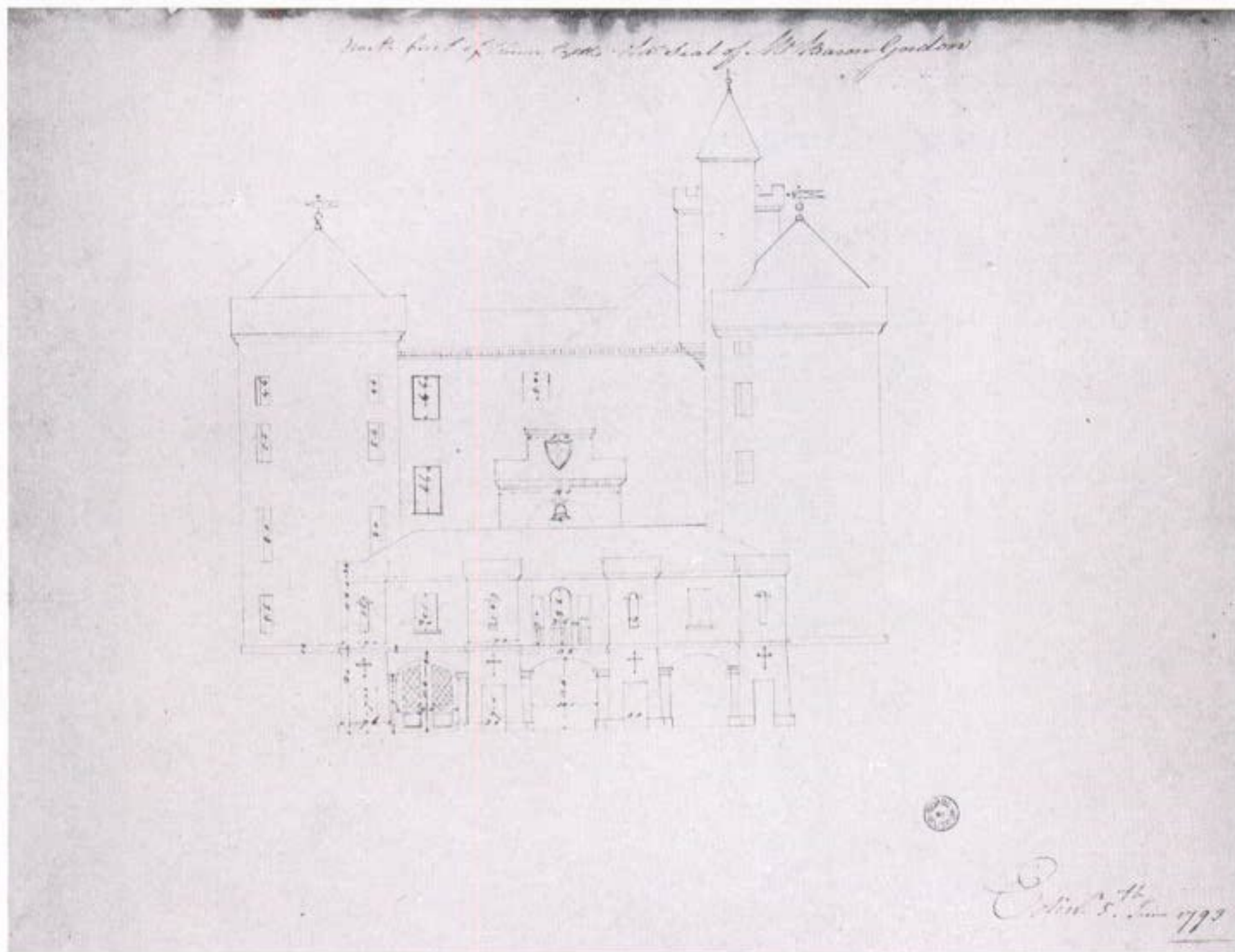


b Cluny Castle: Proposed South Elevation 1793 (Soane Museum)





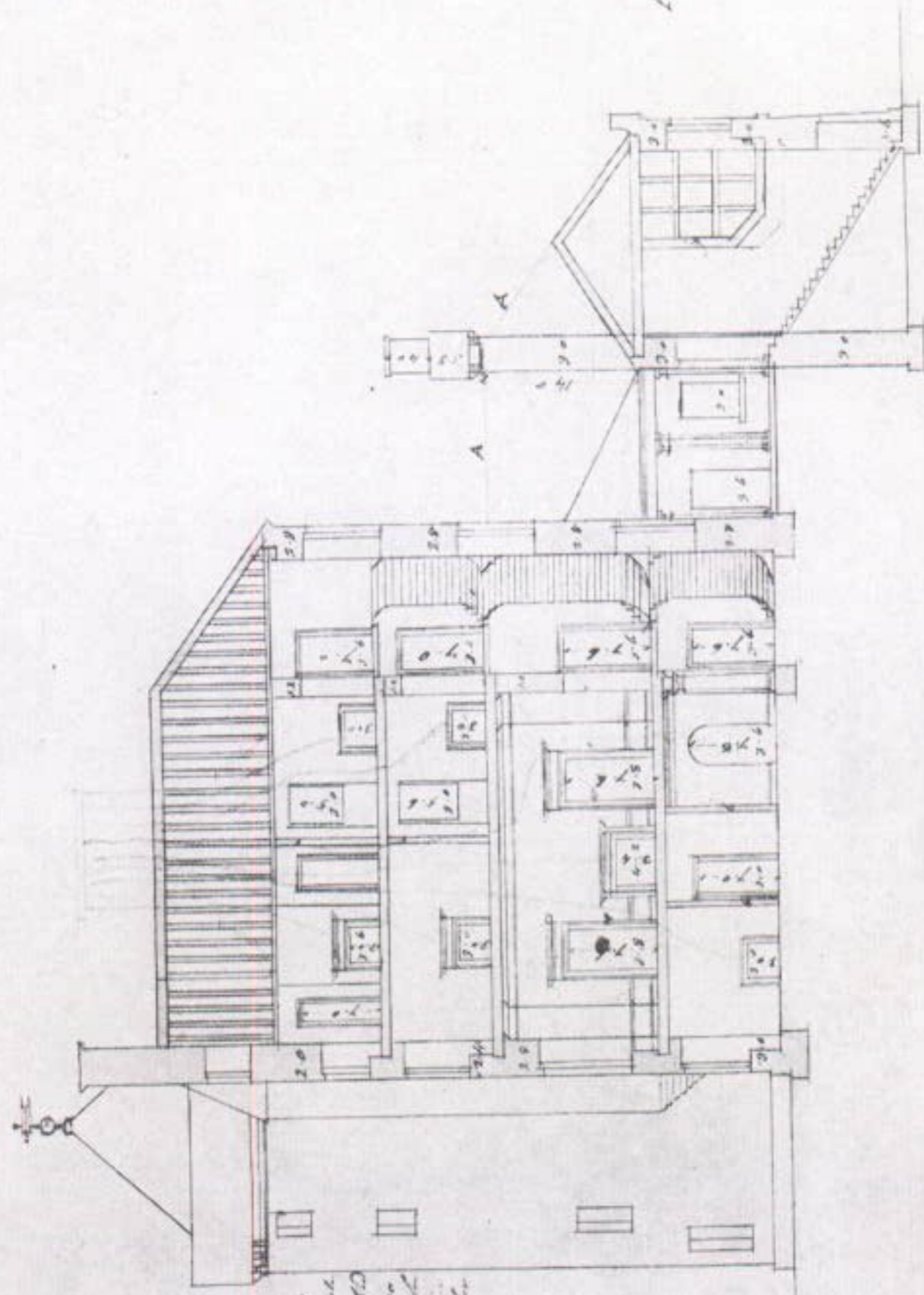
a Cluny Castle: Proposed East Elevation 1793 (Soane Museum)



b Cluny Castle: Proposed North Elevation 1793 (Soane Museum)



*Section from South to North along the new addition to Cluny Castle. Southward of  
the former building.*



*AA Section through the new addition.*

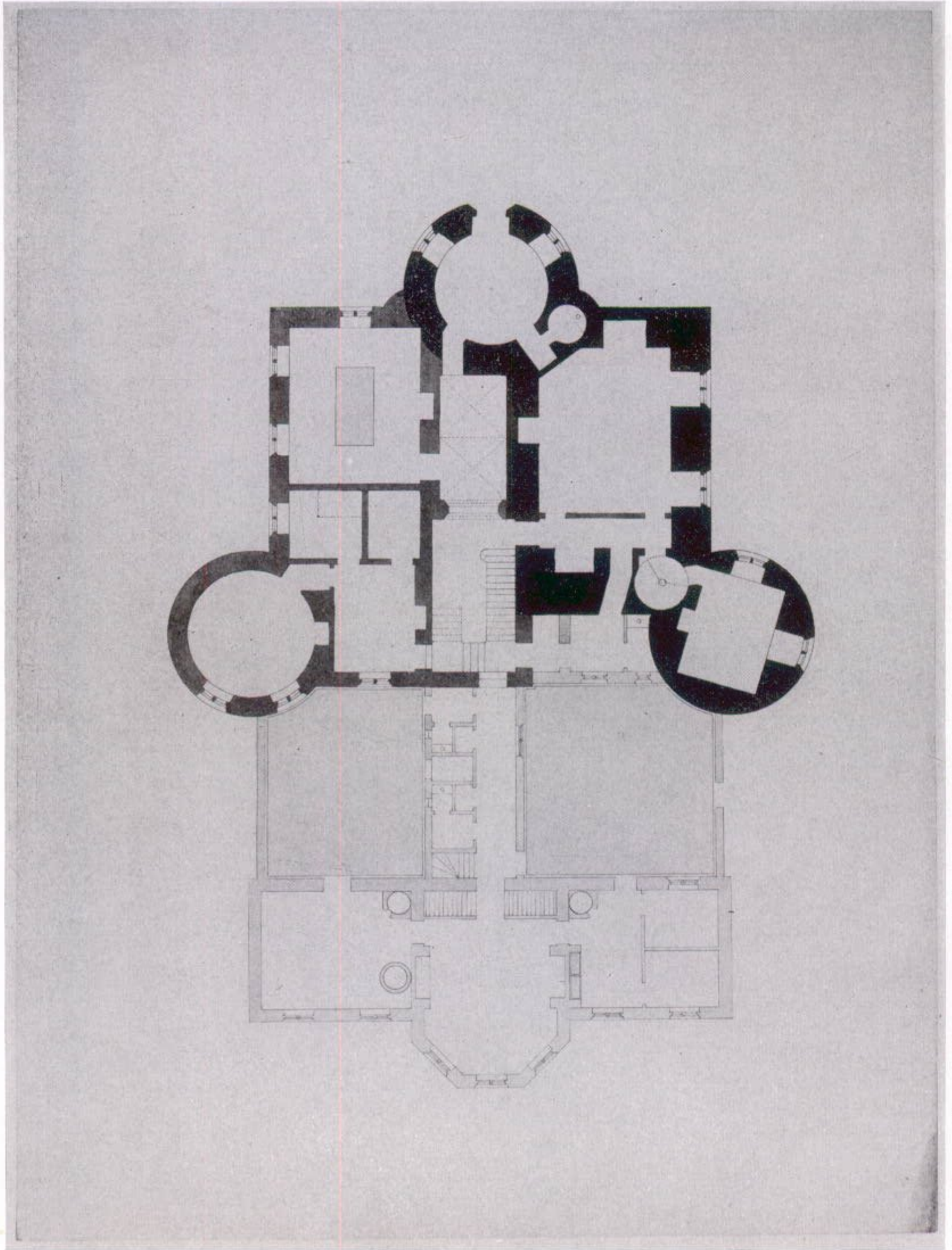
*W. B. Smith, June 1793*

*NOTE: The drawing of the new  
and additions are taken  
from the original plan  
made by the architect  
Mr. B. Smith, in the  
year 1793.*

*Section from South to North*

Cluny Castle: Section thro' proposed addition 1793 (Soane Museum)





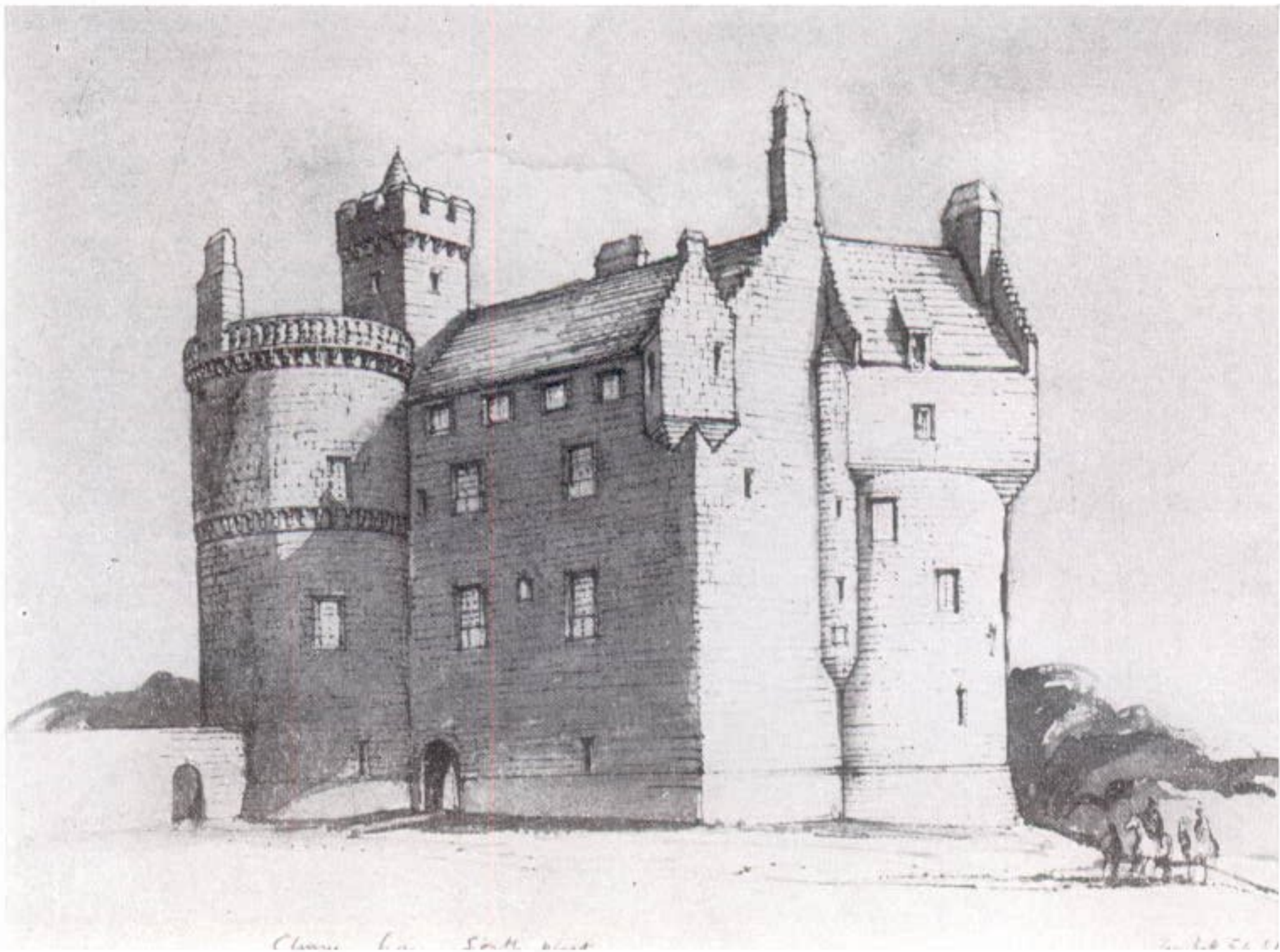
Cluny Castle: Ground Floor, proposed alteration c 1816 (Yale Centre of British Art)



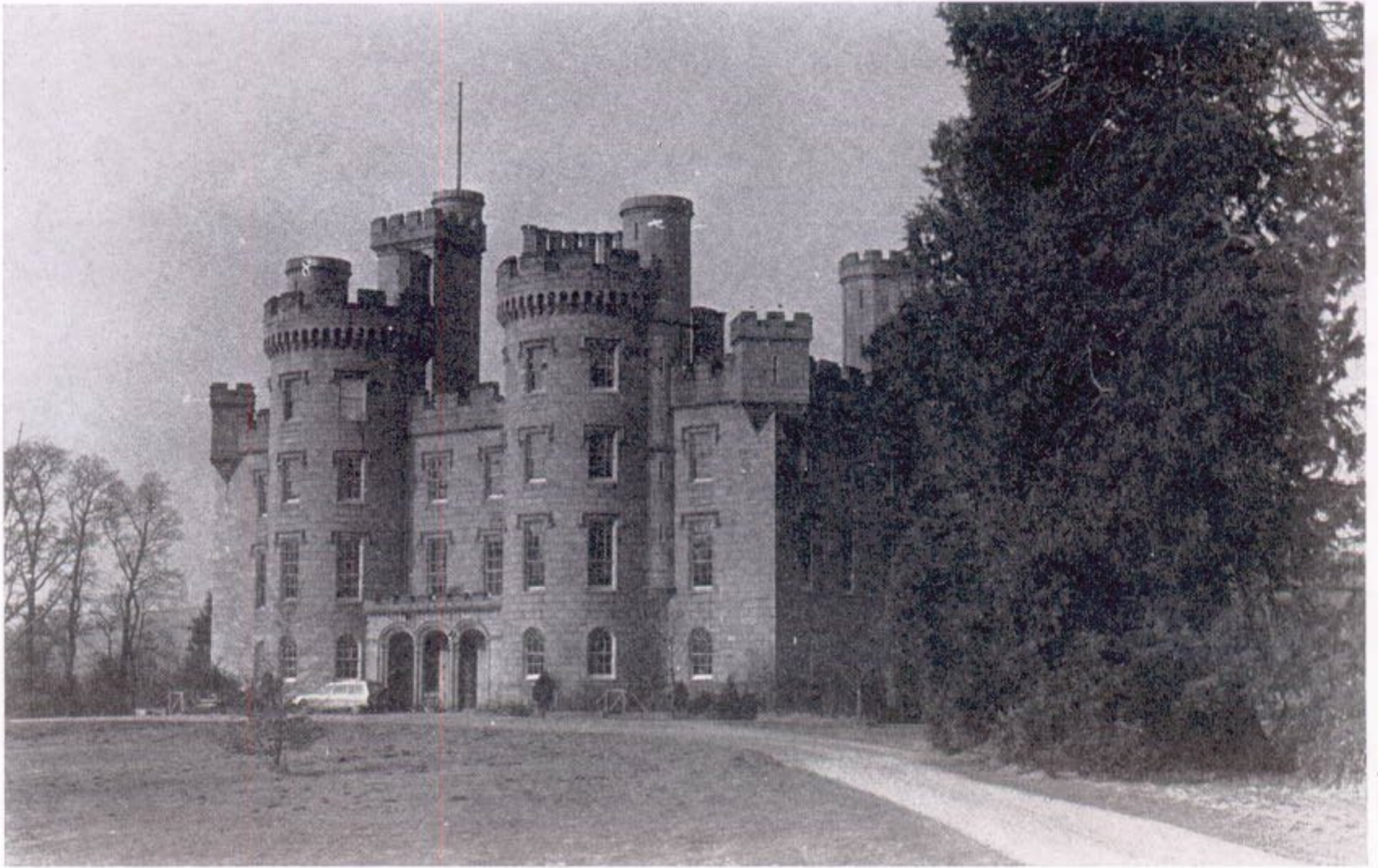
a Cluny Castle: from SE *C. Hullmandel*  
(RCAMS)



b Cluny Castle: c 1607. Reconstruction HGS.  
Realisation TB







a Cluny Castle: view from SE



b Cluny Castle: view from SW